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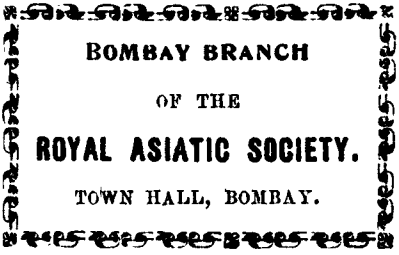


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PRINCE BISMARCK

*Born 1 April, 1815.*

*THE STATESMEN SERIES.*

# PRINCE BISMARCK.

BY

CHARLES LOWE. M.A.,

AUTHOR OF

*"Alexander III. of Russia," &c., &c.*

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# PREFACE.

SINCE the appearance of my large two-volume work —"Prince Bismarck: an Historical Biography," ten years ago, much fresh material has come to light; and the substance of this up-to-date material—sometimes corrective, sometimes supplementary—I have incorporated in the present sketch, which has also the advantage of now presenting the political career, if happily not yet the life, of the great Chancellor as a finished whole.

C. L.

*Constitutional Club, 1st March, 1895.*

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# LIFE OF PRINCE BISMARCK.

## CHAPTER I.

### STUDENT AND SQUIRE.

Origin of Name—Ancestry—His Parents—Early Impressions—At School—At Goettingen—Duellist and "Honest Broker"—John Lothrop Motley—Anecdotes—Amory Coffin—Studies in Berlin—"My Dear Astley"—Predilection for Military Career—In the Wilderness—Visit to England—His First Decoration—Groping about for a Calling—"In Love for Twenty-four Hours"—Marriage.

THE nineteenth century had only reached its fifteenth year when the man who was destined to make a greater figure on its stage of action than any of his contemporaries first saw the light of the world. His birthplace was an old family mansion, or manor house, in the village of Schönhausen, near the right bank of the Elbe, between Rathenow and Stendal, in the Old Mark of Brandenburg, and his name was Otto Edward Leopold von Bismarck. Not very far away on the other side of the Elbe, near Stendal (the birthplace of the great art-critic, Winckelmann), there stands a sleepy old townlet called Bismark (without the *e*) guarded by a ruined old castle like a border-keep; and it was undoubtedly from this fortalice that the ancestors of the Unifier of modern Germany derived their name. On

the other hand, this Bismark stronghold was unquestionably so called from its being the residence of the Warden of the March, or Mark, on the *Biese* brook, which here meanders away to the Elbe. The Bismarcks are now a very numerous race, some of them being settled in Würtemberg, but they are all descended from a common stock in the Old Mark of Brandenburg. There is Bismarck-Schönhausen, Bismarck-Bohlen, Bismarck-Külz, Bismarck a dozen other designations, which are territorial to distinguish one from another, like, for example, Grant of Rothiemurchus, or of Dalvey, or of Ballindalloch. But the Schönhausen branch was chief of the Bismarck clan.

The family had attained noble rank as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, but before this one of its members, Rudolph by name, had belonged to the "Guild of Tailors" (say cloth-merchants) at Stendal, which was then a thriving Hansa city. In the seventeenth century two of the name of Bismarck lived as publishers at Halle and Wolfenbüttel respectively, and in all probability they were related to the Schönhausen line of their name. If so, they must have been regarded as very degenerate members of a race which, for centuries, had scorned to devote themselves to anything but hunting, farming, and fighting. The petty noblesse, or *von*-ocracy, of Brandenburg, has always formed soldierly material second to none, and among the fighting families of the Old Mark, the ancient kernel of the present kingdom of Prussia, the Bismarcks always held a foremost place. Several of them had fought in the Thirty Years' War, some for the Emperor and others for the Swedes.

In Bismarck's veins flowed some of the best blood to be found between the Elbe and the Baltic, including

that of Field-Marshal von Derfflinger, the conqueror of the Swedes, General von Zieten, and Lieutenant von Katté, whose savage execution by Frederick William I. formed such a tragical incident in the youth of Frederick the Great. Most of the Chancellor's paternal ancestors had been mighty hunters and drinkers before the Lord. His great grandfather in particular (who fell in one of the battles of the Seven Years' War) had in one year slain as many as 154 red deer, and his toasts were generally accompanied by trumpet-blasts and carbine volleys across the table from a section of his troopers. The Chancellor was supposed to be the very image of this stormful dragoon-major, "so much so, indeed, that, when gazing on his portrait, it was like looking at my own face in the glass."

"My father," wrote Bismarck once to the old Emperor, "entered the Carabineers of the Guard in 1783, and at a review had the honour of being presented, as Junker, to Frederick the Great, on which occasion the great King was graciously pleased to refer in very flattering terms to his grandfather, Major von Bismarck, of the Bayreuth Dragoons, who fell at Czaslau. These and other things that were related to me by my father out of the time of Frederick the Great, as well as a series of letters written by my ancestor from the camps of the Seven Years' War, form the lasting impressions of my childhood."

But more vivid and enduring even than these memories of the Seven Years' War must have been his impressions about the invasion and harrying of Germany by the Napoleonic French which the boy Bismarck gathered from his parents—impressions of wrong, and rapine, and national shame. His father, Charles William Ferdinand, retired cavalry captain, had scarcely brought home to Schönhausen his winsome bride of sixteen when the terrible news of Jena spread like wildfire through the Mark, and the French were

upon them like the Philistines. It was to the mansion house of Schönhausen, also, where Lützow, commander of the famous Free Corps, was carried by a Bismarck for medical treatment after being wounded at Dodendorf. All these things must have made a deep and lasting impression on young Otto von Bismarck when subsequently related to him by his parents, especially by his mother, who had given birth to him on 1st April, 1815, just about the time that Napoleon, escaped from Elba, was preparing to meet his doom at Waterloo.

A glance at the genealogical tree of Bismarck shows that his mother—Louise Wilhelmina Menken—was the only commoner who had ever married into the family. But if she did not bring the Bismarcks blood, she at least brought them brains. For it is not to be doubted that the future Chancellor inherited much of his intellectual capacity from his mother. She was the daughter of a Geheimrath, or Privy Councillor, who (curiously enough) had helped Frederick the Great to manage his foreign affairs. He was descended from a merchant-patrician family of Oldenburg, which had contributed to the Fatherland several learned professors (at Leipzig and elsewhere), a poet ("Philander von der Linde"), an historiographer to August the Strong, and the founder of the first magazine of the learned in Germany—*Acta Eruditorum*. Thus it will be seen that the future Unifier of Germany, anticipating the advice of Heine, could scarcely have been more careful than he was in the selection of his parents—one of whom represented the principle of body and the other that of mind in a very eminent degree. A striking instance of human inability to see into the future was presented by the parental announcement in a Berlin newspaper of the birth of the future Chancellor, which, while record-

ing the momentous fact, requested the friends of the family "to dispense with their congratulations."

Though born in Brandenburg, Otto von Bismarck spent his earliest years in Pomerania, where his father had inherited some property (Kniephof); and it was here—where the retired Captain von Bismarck hunted, handled grain, sold timber, and discussed French politics with the local gentry—that his illustrious son received his first impressions of life. At the tender age of six he was placed in a boarding-school at Berlin, conducted on the Pestalozzi system; and from this, at the age of twelve, he passed to the Grey Friars Gymnasium, or High School, his chief masters, Prevost and Bonnel, being men of Huguenot descent. Here he studied for four years, and left with such a certificate of excellence in scholarship as was very rare in Germany sixty years ago, and is hardly ever given now. It entitled young Bismarck (he was only in his seventeenth year) to pass on to the university, and his choice fell on the Hanoverian one of Goettingen.

Here he remained for three semestrial terms (May, 1832, to November, 1833), entering heart and soul into the spirit of the place, reading, duelling, and drinking in the time-honoured German way. In his first term he was twice fined for heaving a bottle out at the window and smoking in the street, and he was at least twice sentenced to the "Carcer," or university gaol. In his "History of Goettingen," Dr. Otto Meier, basing his narrative on official sources, gives the following account of the gravest of Bismarck's offences:—

It appears that at a ball in January, 1833, a quarrel took place between an English student from Cumberland, named Knight, and a certain Baron von Grabow. A duel with pistols was arranged for the following morning, and Bismarck, who already

had a good knowledge of English, was asked to attend in the capacity of interpreter and umpire. Knight's second was an Englishman named Marcus Wright; but Grabow's second disappointed him at the last moment, and so Bismarck had to officiate in his stead. From the evidence afterwards adduced before the Rector, it seems that the two principals arrived on the ground in the most bloodthirsty temper; and Bismarck with the greatest difficulty persuaded them to substitute twelve paces for the three on which they had already determined. When he came to take the measure, however, he cunningly lengthened the twelve into fourteen; and the result was that no one was injured. The Rector saw no extenuating circumstances in the whole proceeding, and, besides severely punishing the principals, he sent Baron von Grabow's humane second to solitary confinement for ten days, and, as he did not appear at the first summons, an extra day was added.

It is interesting to note that, even at this early age, Bismarck began to show signs of those qualities which were afterwards to procure for him the European title of "honest broker." He had done all he could to reconcile the duellists before loading their pistols for them, and when at last the meeting became inevitable, he had managed so to elongate the range of fire as to minimise the chances of its resulting in blood-shed. Among Bismarck's contemporaries at Goettingen was Herr Windthorst, a Hanoverian, who was destined, as the Leader of the Clericals, or Ultramontane party, to become one of the German Chancellor's most formidable opponents in the Reichstag. But perhaps the fellow-student whose company he most courted was a young American, John Lothrop Motley, with whom he now formed a friendship that was to last through life.* Writing on 4th July, 1875, to a gentleman in Philadelphia, who had sent him a cane

* Bismarck himself furnished an interesting account of the origin of this friendship to Motley's biographer, Oliver Wendell Holmes.

made from the wood of Independence Hall, Bismarck said:—

"For this historical treasure I beg you to accept my heartiest thanks. I shall honour it, carefully preserve it, and, with other relics of remarkable years, bequeath it to my children. This day is one of those which always recall to my mind the happy hours that I have spent on many a Fourth of July with American friends, the first time with John Lothrop Motley, Mitchell G. King, and Amory Coffin, in 1832, at Goettingen. I only wish that you, my dear Sir, and I could always be as sound and happy as we four lusty fellows when, forty years ago, we celebrated the Fourth of July at Goettingen."

With Amory Coffin at Goettingen Bismarck laid a bet of two dozen champagne—the winner to stand and the loser to cross the sea for it—that Germany would be united in twenty years. This period proved too short by a long way, but the wager was interesting all the same as showing that even then Bismarck had begun to reflect on the problem of which the solution was to prove his great life-task.

From Goettingen he passed to Berlin, in the autumn of 1833, to continue his studies with his friend Motley, and indeed the Goettingen professors were by no means sorry at his going. For he had fallen deeper and deeper into conflict with the spirit and letter of academic authority. He was ordered to undergo three days' imprisonment for having been present at a duel, and a further sentence of four days for having taken part in an "illegal organisation." A curious entry in the University records follows the minute of these punishments. The "Studiosus von Bismarck" informed the Rector that he was about to proceed to the Prussian capital in order to enter upon a new course of studies. It was consequently adjudged that "his sentence of imprisonment should be 'satisfied' at Berlin." In this way

young Bismarck made his entry into the city which he was destined to raise to the dignity of the metropolis of United Germany.

The future Unifier of the Fatherland scorned to read for a degree, though he passed the very stiff examination entitling him to enter the Civil Service of the State, and then he acted for some time as "Auscultator," or official reporter, to one of the Berlin tribunals. It was during this time that, at a Court ball, he was first presented to the Prince of Prussia, whom he was afterwards to raise to the rank of Emperor. "Well," quoth the soldierly Prince, with the true eye of a Hohenzollern for a likely grenadier, "Justice seems to call her young recruits according to the standard of the Guards." After this he served for some time in the higher capacity of Referendary at Aix-la-Chapelle, the ancient coronation city of the German Emperors, and here again, as at Goettingen, he mixed much with the foreign society of the place, especially the English, by one of whose Dukes he was pronounced to be "quite an Englishman." That, at least, he now wrote the language wonderfully well may be judged from the following letter :—

"MY DEAR ASTLEY,—You have been so kind to allow me to ask you for some English books—a kindness which I shall be glad to take profit of. I am sure that old Shakespeare's works make part of your library, and I would be greatly obliged to you if you would send me the volumes containing *Richard III.* and *Hamlet*.

"We are here just in the same state as you have left us; my friend Norcott is just as tipsy after dinner as he ever has been. Savigny is as copious in words as ever he was; and Montebello as good-looking as you have seen him and nothing else. As for me, I am a little half-seas-over, too; but I am as much your friend as I learned to be it so in the few days I had the pleasure of seeing you. You will pardon me that I write to you in so bad English as I do. I hope that I shall learn it better. If you will not com-

here before the time, you may be sure that I shall make you a visit in the month of August, and 'that then we shall meet again in thunder, lightening, or in rain.'

"Till there wishes you good-bye your most sincere

"BISMARCK."

From Aix-la-Chapelle he was transferred to the Crown Office at Potsdam, and at the same time he entered the Jäger, or Sharpshooter, Battalion of the Guards as a one-year volunteer to do his legal term of military service. And a more strapping soldier had never joined the ranks of the Prussian Army, which is saying a good deal. His heart, too, was all with the army. After he had become the greatest statesman of his time, he wrote to his Sovereign :—

"I have always regretted that my parents never allowed me to testify my attachment to the Royal House (of Prussia), and my enthusiasm for the greatness and glory of the Fatherland in the front rank of a regiment rather than behind a writing-desk. And even now, after being raised by your Majesty to the highest honours of a statesman, I cannot altogether express a feeling of regret at not having been similarly able to carve out a career for myself as a soldier. . . . Perhaps I should have become a useless General, but, if I had been free to follow the bent of my own inclination, I would rather have won battles for your Majesty than diplomatic campaigns."

His military year of service, begun at Potsdam, he finished at Greifswald, whither he had got himself transferred in order to complete his training for the country squire life which seemed to be in store for him by attending lectures on agriculture and kindred subjects. For about the next eight years, or from the age of twenty-four to that of thirty-two (when he married and appeared upon the political stage), we find Bismarck living, so to speak, "out in the wilderness," oscillating between Pomerania and the Old Mark, farming, hunting, soldiering, carousing, studying, acting as

local deputy and magistrate, and rubbing off the rust of country life with occasional excursions into the great world. One of these excursions was to England, where he was most favourably impressed by the country and its inhabitants, as will be seen from the following letter, which I cannot refrain from quoting:—

"London, 28—7—42.

"MY DEAR FATHER,—Since I wrote to you last from York, I have seen many noteworthy things. In York there is nothing interesting but the imposingly beautiful Minster, with many old monuments, which are better preserved here than anywhere else, because foreign troops have never been in the country. Besides that, I saw the barracks and stables of Prince Albert's Regiment of Hussars, whose Colonel is the Lord Cardigan who became famous by his trial in the House of Lords for fighting a duel. The officers, though I knew none of them, were extremely polite, invited me to dinner, and showed me everything. The horses of these Hussars are, on the average, considerably heavier and bigger than those of our Gardes du Corps; the ration of the remount horses, which were doing absolutely nothing yet, is almost four pecks of oats and twelve pounds of hay."

The writer then goes on to describe the appearance of the country (from Hull to Manchester), the peculiarities of hotel life, and the manners and customs of the inhabitants:—

"In general," he says, "I cannot sufficiently praise the extraordinary politeness and complaisance of the English, which far exceed my expectations. Even people of the lowest rank are polite, very modest and sensible if one speaks to them. . . . To-morrow I start *viâ* Portsmouth (where I shall see a fleet ready for sailing) for Boulogne."

Soon after returning home from his excursion to England and France, Bismarck indulged his fondness for a soldier's life by again serving for some time in a Lancer regiment of the Landwehr, this time as lieutenant; and it was during this period that he earned his first decoration—the one of which he always con-

tinued to be proudest—the Prussian Humane Society's medal for saving his soldier-servant from drowning. It was also during this period that he gained the title of "mad Bismarck" from his wild and startling ways, his reckless rides, his capacity for drink—a blend of porter and champagne was his favourite beverage—his Gargantuan appetite, and the general boldness and originality of his character.

In his search for a career, he yielded to the advice of his friends and returned to Potsdam to resume his bureaucratic work. But this soon became intolerable to his bounding spirit, and on the death of his father (1845)—he had lost his mother six years previously—he settled at his native Schönhausen, which had fallen to him in the division of the family property. Here he led the life of a gentleman farmer with all its cares, as he phrased it, of "night frosts, sick oxen, bad rape, and worse roads, dead lambs, half-starved sheep, want of straw, fodder, money, potatoes, and manure."

He had been offered the post of Landrath, or administrative chief of a Government Circle (*Kreis*), or Arrondissement, but his ambition did not lie that way. The independent life of a country squire was much more to his taste, and for the next two years he continued to lead this life, being much engrossed with "lawsuits, sporting matters, and embankment affairs." For he had accepted the post of "Dyke-Captain," or District Water Bailiff, of the Elbe, an unsalaried office which he was all the readier to undertake as its vigilant exercise materially affected the state of his own riparian property.

He had been previously "in love for twenty-four hours"; but about the time of his father's death he became alive to the terrible truth that he—

"must marry, the devil take me. . . . I feel lonely and forsaken, and this mild damp weather makes me melancholy and longingly prone to love. . . . It is no use my struggling. I shall have to marry; everybody wills it so, and nothing seems more natural, as both of us have been left behind. She makes no impression on me, it is true, but that is the case with all of them; still, unfortunate are those who cannot change their inclination with their linen, however seldom the latter event may occur!"

But at last Bismarck found a lady who made a deep impression on him—Fräulein Johanna, daughter of Henrich von Puttkamer, a Pomeranian squire, and in the course of a tour in the Harz country he asked this young lady to become his wife. It was a very curious coincidence, as Bismarck afterwards related, that on the very spot (a garden seat in the ruined old castle of Harzburg, once the favourite residence of the German Emperor, Henry IV., who went to Canossa to do degrading penance to the Pope) where he asked the hand of his future wife, there should afterwards have been erected a monument to commemorate his famous declaration: "*Nach Canossa gehen wir nicht!*"

The parents of Fräulein von Puttkamer, well aware of the awful reputation of the "Mad Junker," were very much less enamoured of him than was their only daughter, who already saw in her lover the making of a great man, and they could only be brought to surrender their treasure after a method of attack which was unconscious training for the man who was afterwards to force the capitulation of Paris. In July, 1847, Bismarck was married to this lady, who was nine years his junior, but the ideal of a German wife, and a union was thus formed in which the most unscrupulous enemies of the Prince never even affected to find the slightest flaw. "You little know what this woman has done for me," he once said to Signor Crispi, when talking about his wife.

# CHAPTER II.

## PARLIAMENTARIAN.

Constitutionalism in Prussia—Frederick William III. and IV.—The First United Diet—Bismarck a vicarious Member—England and Prussia compared—"Dark and Mediæval"—Bismarck and the King—The March Revolution—"Dideldum Dittera!"—Demanding Alsace from France—Bismarck as a Journalist—The "Jena of the Prussian Nobility"—Constitution-making—The German Question—The Frankfort Assembly—The Imperial Crown—Why Frederick William refused it—Tri-Regal Alliance—The Erfurt Parliament—A modern Khalif Omar—Lafontaine's Fable—Olmütz defended by Bismarck—The King hatches his Ministerial Egg.

About six months before his marriage, Bismarck had made his first appearance on the political stage of his country. This was in the so-called United Diet, which Frederick William IV., reluctantly yielding to the spirit of the time, had summoned to Berlin in February, 1847. His father, Frederick William III., had promised his subjects a kind of constitution for the efforts and sacrifices which he demanded of them in the Liberation War, but he had failed to keep his word. Nor would his son, who succeeded him in 1840, have done what his predecessor had declined to do, had he not felt that it would be dangerous for his dynasty to palter any longer with his people's hopes.

Hitherto, the only kind of parliamentary rights enjoyed by the Prussians were represented by the eight

Provincial Diets, akin to the Zemstvos subsequently granted in Russia by the Tsar Emancipator of the serfs. What the more intelligent portion of the Prussian people now wanted was a national Parliament; but the very utmost that their weak and wayward King could bring himself to grant was the experiment of an Assembly composed of the members of the eight Provincial Diets—an Assembly, however, endowed with mere consultative and petitioning powers. There was to be no Constitution, for the King swore that he would never allow "a sheet of paper to intervene between the Lord God in Heaven and his subjects."

Such a declaration delighted the heart of no man more than that of Herr von Bismarck, who, now in his thirty-second year, repaired to Berlin as vicarious Knight's deputy for his native district. The real member of this district chanced to be ill at the time, and so Bismarck, as his under-study, was called upon to make his first appearance on the parliamentary stage of his country. In the local Diet he had already made one speech on "the excessive consumption of tallow in the workhouse"! and in the United Diet he was in no hurry to open his lips. When at last he did claim the ear of the strange Assembly, it was only to protest against all encroachments on the Royal prerogative. Prussia, he argued, had hitherto done excellently well under her *régime* of divine right, and well should be left alone. *A Deo rex, a rege lex* was a maxim of government quite good enough for him.

"A parallel," he said, "had been drawn between the way in which the English people had secured their rights in 1688, after expelling James II., and how the Prussian nation might now assert theirs. But analogies of the kind were always misleading. At that time the English were very differently situated from the Prussians now, for a century of revolution and civil war had in-

vested them with the power of giving away their crown under conditions that were accepted by William of Orange; whereas the Prussian monarchs possessed a practically absolute crown, not by the favour of the people, but by the grace of God, and they had now voluntarily parted with some of their rights to their subjects, a spectacle rare in history."

Bismarck frankly confessed that his views were of the kind which had been characterised by his opponents as "dark and mediæval," and that he clung to prejudices imbibed with his mother's milk. To these prejudices he gave the frankest expression in the course of a debate on the emancipation of the Jews.

"He was no enemy of the Jews as men; to a certain extent, indeed, he even liked them. He would even grant them every right short of holding posts of authority in a Christian State. They had been told that the idea of the Christian State was an idle fiction, a mere invention of modern philosophers, but he was of opinion that the theory was as old as the *ci-devant* Holy Roman Empire, or as the family of European nations; nay, that it was the very soil in which these had taken root, and that every State, if it were to last, or vindicate its disputed title to existence, must repose on a religious basis. For him the phrase 'By God's Grace,' appended to the names of Christian Sovereigns, was no mere empty sound, but an acknowledgment rather that the princes thus entrusted with God's sceptre meant to rule with it on earth in accordance with His will, as revealed in His Holy Gospel, and he did not see that this end could be in any way promoted by the help of the Jews."

After sitting for about three months the United Diet was dismissed, and Bismarck was heartily glad that the King had heeded so little of its "advice." The whole experiment had turned out to be a mockery and a sham; and in his jubilation over the result the knightly deputy for Jerichow went and married. His honeymoon trip he took to Italy, and at Venice he forgathered with his Sovereign, who had been only too glad to escape thus from the constitutional worries which beset him at home. He had a long conversation

with Frederick William IV., who was in every respect almost the very opposite of the man who had proved his ardent champion in the United Diet. As Herr von Sybel remarks, "penetration of character was not one of Frederick William's strong points," and yet he seems to have been struck by something quite unusual in the personality of the Knight of the Mark who had spoken out so strongly for the theory of the Christian State, and the uncurtailed power of the Prussian Crown. "The King," said Bismarck afterwards, "regarded me as a kind of egg, out of which he might be able some day to hatch a Minister."

Meanwhile the King was busy hatching a very different kind of egg, and that was the egg of revolution, which at last broke out in his capital on 18th March, 1848, about a year after he had convoked his first United Diet. The doings of that Diet had but deepened the popular discontent, and filled the capital with elements which only needed the application of a spark to bring about an explosion. Such a spark, too, was presently furnished by the news from Paris that the "Citizen King" had been dethroned, and from Vienna that barricades had likewise been thrown up in the streets of that capital. The fire of revolution was quick to spread to Berlin, which soon began to run with the blood of its inhabitants. The sanguinary conflict between the citizens and the royal troops had been primarily due to a misunderstanding, but behind that there was the deplorable vacillation of Frederick William himself, who was divided between his own sentimental tendencies and the resolute advice that was offered him by his soldierly brother, the Prince of Prussia. So high did popular feeling at this time run against the latter that his portrait was pitched out at

the window of a masonic lodge, and he himself, the future German Emperor, had to flee to England.

Bismarck happened to be at Schönhausen at the time, and he was equally filled with anger and astonishment at the way in which the revolutionary riff-raff had been allowed to carry everything before it. Had *he* been in power, his remedy would have been a very different one. As he once said :—

"After the days of March, the troops were in Potsdam and the King in Berlin. When I went out to Potsdam a great discussion was going on as to what should be done. General Möllendorff, who was there, sat on a stool not far from me, looking very sour. They had peppered him so that he could only sit half on. One was advising this and another that, but nobody very well knew what to do. I sat near the piano, saying nothing, but I struck up a couple of notes, 'Dideldum Dittera' (here he hummed the beginning of the infantry double-quick step). The old fellow got up from his stool at once, his face beaming with delight, embraced me, and said, 'That's the right thing!—I know what you mean—march on Berlin.' As things fell out, however, nothing came of it."

"The true motive power in those days," he also said, "was a mere lust of theft." Envy and avarice, according to him, were at the bottom of all the evil, which was not to be cured by mere democratic concessions. Large cities, as being the hotbeds of covetous passions and revolution, ought to be razed—an opinion which caused him to be known for some time as the "Town Destroyer." Among the other assurances with which the King had responded to the demands of his revolutionary subjects, he had promised the Poles of Posen a kind of qualified Home Rule, while sending troops among them to restore order; and in an article he wrote for a newspaper at Magdeburg, Bismarck made bold to characterise this policy "as a lamentable display of Quixotism." "I should have found it much more intelligible," he remarked, "had the first out-

burst of German strength and unity (begotten by the Revolution) vented itself in demanding Alsace from France, and in planting the German flag on the Cathedral of Strasburg!" Already!

As a journalist Bismarck had thus made his *début* at Madgeburg, the capital of his native province; but presently he became one of the most valued contributors to the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, an organ which had been founded at Berlin "to oppose with force and emphasis the unchained demons of revolt, and to devote especial attention to the internal development of Prussia and Germany." We have it on the authority of Herr Wagener, first editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, that "scarcely a number appeared during the sitting of Parliament that did not contain some kind of an article from the pen of Herr von Bismarck," and that "in everything relating to the Chambers he was our best contributor."

The Revolution had wrung from the King the promise of a Constitution, and the United Diet was again convoked to pave the way for a Constituent Assembly. But Bismarck's voice continued to be that of one crying in the wilderness. Nothing which the Crown had done was to his mind. He viewed with apprehension "the Phaethon-like flight of Prussian policy in Schleswig-Holstein"; and the concessions which the King had seen fit to make to the so-called spirit of the time equally filled him with foreboding. This second United Diet had been to Bismarck, as he sadly phrased it, "the Jena of the Prussian nobility"; and so disgusted was he with the course of affairs that he declined to sit in the ensuing Constituent Assembly, which met in one of the Royal theatres to devise a Constitution. Finally this Assembly, the "Rump" of

it at least, had to be cleared away by the bayonets of "Papa" Wrangel, and then the King, himself sick of all this quarrelling and anarchy, granted on his own authority a Constitution on the model of that of Belgium. At the same time he summoned a bicameral Parliament, the first of its kind in Prussia, to ratify the new Charter.

In this Parliament Bismarck sought and found a seat in compliance with the express wish of the King. But though he had declared to his constituents that he was animated by a desire "to reknit the loosened bonds of trust between Crown and crowd," his demeanour in the Chamber little accorded with this avowal. For all he did was to gird at the Crown for having been so weak, and at the crowd for being so presumptuous. The people? Pooh! A mere phrase invented by pot-house politicians! The ballot-box? Bah! A mere dice-box! Majorities? Psha! Mere lotteries! Interpellations? Parliamentary questions which should be responded to from the Ministerial bench with a deafening roll of drums! The champions of the Constitution had referred to the financial power of the English House of Commons as something which ought to have its counterpart in Prussia.

"England, it was true," he said, "ruled herself, although the Lower House had the right of refusing taxes; but these references to England were their bane. Give us everything English which we do not have: English piety, English respect for the law; give us the entire English Constitution, but with it, at the same time, all the conditions of English landlordism, English wealth and common sense, and especially an English Lower House; in brief, all we do not possess, and then I will also say, 'You can rule us in the English way.' But even then I would not deem it incumbent on the Prussian Crown to let itself be forced into the powerless position of the English one, which looks more like an ornamental cupola of the State edifice, while in ours I recognise the central and supporting column."

The main pillar of the Prussian State never was, and never would be, its Parliament, but its army. It was the latter which had made the Prussian Government so strong; and with reference to the concessions which had already been wrung from the Crown by the Revolution—

"He hoped that this was the last time the achievements of the Prussian sword would be given away with generous hand in order to appease the insatiable demands of a phantom which, under the name of the spirit of the time or public opinion, stupefied with its deafening clamour the reason of princes and people till each grew afraid of the other's shadow, and forgot that beneath the lion's skin of the spectre there was only a very noisy but very innocuous animal."

In the matter of the Prussian Constitution—which was finally passed by the two Chambers, and promulgated by Royal decree (31st January, 1850)—Bismarck had shown a purely negative attitude. But this attitude of pure negation was still more marked with regard to the larger question of national unity. For the unconverted Saul of Tarsus could hardly have shown more zeal in persecuting the early Christians than Bismarck now displayed in scoffing at the Unionists,—not, it is true, at their aims, which were just as dear to him as to the most ardent patriot, but at the manner in which they proposed to realise them.

Throughout all Germany the Revolution had not only re-kindled a love of liberty in the various States, but also a longing for the day when these States should be combined into a common nation, one and indivisible. The Revolution had inaugurated the era of Constitutionalism throughout the Fatherland—for the minor States could not venture to hold back where Prussia led the way; and concurrently with this movement in the separate Monarchies a German Assembly, elected by

universal suffrage, met at Frankfort (April, 1848) to discuss the paramount question of national unity. Our own Prince Consort had written to the Kings of Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Würtemberg, urging them and their fellow-Sovereigns also to meet at Frankfort and act in concert with the representatives of the German people. But this they scornfully declined to do, and that meant the condemnation of the Assembly to hopeless inanition.

Nevertheless, this Assembly—which included such men as Dahlmann, Droysen, Duncker, Von Raumer, and Gervinus, the historians; Welcker, the publicist; Arndt and Uhland, the poets; Jacob Grimm, the philologist; and Simson, the jurist—buckled to its self-imposed task in the most patriotic, if short-sighted and one-sided manner; and in about a year's time—after a frightful amount of wrangling—it had elaborated a something which it was pleased to call a National Constitution, but which Bismarck contemptuously characterised as a "transcript of the parchment of Magna Charta on Continental blotting-paper." To crown all—for this Constitution still required a chief—the Assembly elected the King of Prussia to the hereditary dignity of "Emperor of the Germans," and sent a deputation to Berlin (April, 1849) to beg his Majesty's acceptance of the title.

But this Frederick William IV. emphatically declined to do. No one had spoken more enthusiastically about national unification than he, but now he would have none of it in this particular form. His Majesty described the proffered Imperial crown as "the iron fetter by which the descendant of four-and-twenty Sovereigns, the ruler of sixteen million subjects, and the lord of the loyalest and bravest army in the world

would be made the mere serf of the Revolution." True, the German people had offered him the Imperial crown, but a much more potent factor in the politics of the Fatherland than the German people was the body of German Sovereigns, and they had held aloof from the transaction. How could the King of Prussia accept such an imperfect mandate, and expose himself to the derision, not to speak of the possible resistance, of his fellow-Sovereigns—of Austria, in particular?

It was to no purpose that a majority in the Prussian Chamber urged the King to accept the Frankfort Constitution with its Imperial crown and all that. To this demand Count Brandenburg, one of the Ministers, merely replied with an emphatic "Never!" while Bismarck rose to voice his own sentiments in a manner which endeared him more than ever to the King.

"The Frankfort Constitution," he said, "bore upon its brow the broad impress of popular sovereignty, and invited the King to hold his free crown as a mere fief from the people, which simply meant the extinction of his power. The Frankfort crown might be very brilliant, but the gold which gave it genuineness must first be got by melting down the Prussian crown; and he had little hope that the whole could be successfully re-cast in the mould of the National Constitution."

After rejecting the Frankfort Constitution, Frederick William had entered into treaty relations with Hanover and Saxony, with the view of forming a Federation of the German States apart from Austria; but in the next Prussian Parliament to which this fresh project was submitted, Bismarck again assumed the *rôle* of the warning prophet of evil; and his own Cassandra-like utterances on this occasion form the very best and briefest account that could possibly be given of his attitude to the question of national unity, as they may also be taken to form the first clear expres-

sion of that policy of "blood and iron" by which alone this question was to be solved.

"I am inclined to believe," he said, "that Frederick the Great would have turned for a solution of the question to the most prominent characteristic of the Prussian nation—its warlike element—and not without success. For he would have known that now, too, as in the days of our fathers, the sound of the trumpet summoning all to the standard of their sovereign-lord has not yet lost its charm for the Prussian ear, be it for the defence of our own frontiers or for the glory and greatness of Prussia. It was the attachment of the Prussian people to their ruling house; it was the old Prussian virtues of honour, loyalty, obedience, and bravery, which permeate the army from its framework, the corps of officers, to the youngest recruit. This army cherishes no tricolour enthusiasm. In it, as among the rest of the people, you will not find any longing for national regeneration. It is content with the name of Prussian, and proud of it too. These hosts will follow the black and white banner, but not the tricolour; and under the former gladly die for their country. Nay, since the 18th March, they have come to regard the tricolour as the badge of their opponents.

"Familiar to and beloved by them are the strains of the 'Prussian Air,' the 'Old Dessauer' and the 'Hohenfriedberg' marches, but I have never yet heard a Prussian soldier sing, 'What is the German Fatherland?' The people from whom this army is drawn, and who are most truly represented by it, have no desire to see their Prussian kingdom melt away in the putrifying ferment of South-German anarchy. Their loyalty does not cleave to an imperial paper presidency, nor to a princely board of six, but rather to a free and living King of Prussia, the heir of his forefathers; and what this people wills we also wish with it. We all desire to behold the Prussian eagle spread its protecting and controlling pinions from the Memel to the Donnersberg; but free we wish to see it, not fettered by a new Diet of Ratisbon, and not clipped in the wings by that equalising hedgehook whereof we well remember that it was first at Gotha converted into an instrument of peace, while but a few weeks previously in Frankfort it was brandished as a threatening weapon against Prussianism and the ordinances of our King. Prussians we are, and Prussians we will remain. I know that in these words I but express the creed of the Prussian army and of the majority of my countrymen; and I hope to God that we shall also remain Prussians long after this bit of paper

(the German Constitution) has mouldered away like a withered autumn leaf."

"Our watchword," Bismarck wrote about this time in a friend's album, "must not be Federal State at any price, but integrity of the Prussian Crown at any price"; and this was again his battle cry in the National Parliament which sat at Erfurt for a few weeks in the spring of 1850. Curiously enough, it met in the Church of the Augustines, where Martin Luther had said his first mass. It was by no means so representative an Assembly as its Frankfort predecessor; but it had been convoked by Frederick William in the name of the Three-King Alliance, in pursuance of his pledge to the nation, and Bismarck went to Erfurt to help in saving his own Sovereign, so to speak, from himself. He even accepted the post of what might be called Secretary or Clerk of Parliament, and in this capacity he was soon in conflict with the representatives of the Press. To the Editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung* he had already written:—

"I cannot deny that, like Khalif Omar, I have a certain longing, not only to annihilate all books except the Christian 'Koran,' but also to destroy the means of restoring them. The art of printing is the choice weapon of anti-Christ; more so, indeed, than gunpowder, which, though originally the chief, or at least the most visible engine for overturning natural political order and establishing the sovereign *rocher de bronze*, is now more and more assuming the character of a salutary medicine against the evils created by itself—albeit, perhaps, in some measure it belongs to the physic-stock of that doctor who cured a case of cancer in the face by amputating the head. To apply this remedy to the Press were like a fancy production in the manner of Callot."

Entertaining such opinions as these, it was not to be wondered at that Bismarck made bold to exclude from the Press Gallery of the Erfurt Parliament several reporters whom he accused of having wilfully garbled

their accounts of the proceedings; nor could he be induced to withdraw his interdict even by the menace of a strike on the part of the other journalists, who hastened to espouse the cause of their expelled colleagues, and to raise a terrific pother about the freedom and independence of the Press. Alas! they little suspected that the man who had not shrunk from expelling a pack of mendacious reporters from a Press Gallery was in training to extrude Austria from the German family of nations.

The Erfurt Parliament was not long, only a few weeks, in manufacturing another most elaborate Constitution for united Germany; but all this outcome of professorial wisdom Bismarck characterised as a mere attempt to "draw the threadbare coat of French Constitutionalism over the unwieldy body of German unity"; and he made an elaborate estimate of relative forces to show that, under the contemplated Constitution, a million Badeners would have as much political power as sixteen million Prussians—a result which would be tantamount to the "mediatisation" of the King of Prussia in his own country.

"Gentlemen," he said, "if you do not make more concessions to the Prussian, to the old Prussian spirit, call it what you will, than you have hitherto done in this Constitution, then I do not believe in its realisation; and if you attempt to impose this Constitution on this Prussian spirit, you will find it a Bucephalus who carries his accustomed lord and rider with daring joy, but will fling to the earth the presuming Cockney horseman, with all his trappings of sable, red, and gold. Yet I am comforted in my fear of these eventualities by the firm belief that it will not be long before the parties come to regard this Constitution as the two doctors in Lafontaine's fable did the patient whose corpse they had just left. 'He is dead,' said one, 'I said he would die all along.' 'Had he taken my advice,' quoth the other, 'he would be still alive.'"

Bismarck proved quite right in his belief; for the Erfurt Constitution remained an absolutely dead letter —partly owing to the supineness of the Sovereigns, partly to the indifference of their peoples; and by the end of the year 1850 the cause of German unity, to which the Revolution of 1848 had given a renewed impetus, had not advanced by a single hair's breadth. Nay, it had positively gone back. For Olmütz completely undid all that had been done both at Frankfort and at Erfurt, and restored Germany to the *status quo ante.* Austria and Prussia were within an ace of going to war about a constitutional quarrel which had broken out in Hesse-Cassel, and the incident had the effect of bringing to light the deep latent jealousy which divided these rival Powers. But for a threat from the Emperor Nicholas "to fire on the first who fires," these Powers would in all probability have come to blows sixteen years before their time, and German history might have taken a very different course. So, instead of fighting out their quarrel there and then at Fulda, where their eager armies actually stood in sight of one another, they met in conference at Olmütz, in Moravia (November, 1850), and signed a Convention by which Prussia bound herself, among other things, to abandon all her schemes of national unity, and accept the restoration of the old Germanic Diet (or Bund) under the hegemony of Austria.

In the Prussian Chamber the Liberals moved that the King should be asked to dismiss the Ministers who had placed the country in such a painful and humiliating position. But Bismarck warmly opposed the motion, and defended Olmütz as being, in the circumstances, an act of the highest wisdom and expediency.

"If Prussia," he argued, "had gone to war for her union idea—

that mongrel product of timid rulers and tame revolution, which would have the effect of mediatising her under the Chambers of the petty States—she would only have resembled the Englishman who fought a victorious combat with a sentinel in order to be able to hang himself in the sentry-box, a right he claimed for himself and every free Briton. The proposed war" (in support of the people of Hesse against their tyrannical Elector) "was one of democratic propaganda, but the Prussian standard should not mark the gathering ground for all the political outcasts of Europe; and on everyone who could prevent the war, but would not, he invoked the curse of every honest soldier who dies for a cause which in his heart he despises and damns."

That was the last that was heard of the German question in the Prussian Chamber for many years to come. Bismarck had proved himself to be the opponent of Unionism on the lines laid down at Frankfort and Erfurt, while his partiality for Austria was of a very peculiar kind. He regarded the counteraction of democracy as a much more pressing task than the promotion of national unity—as the condition precedent to it, in fact; and in Austria he hailed a welcome ally in the work of undoing much which had been done by the Revolution. Not that he did not feel as acutely as others the national humiliation at Olmütz. As his editorial friend, Herr Wagener, wrote:

"Herr von Bismarck would not have been and remained our partisan, just as he scarcely would then have drawn me closer to him, had he not known that I was in agreement with the schemes which he even then cherished, though they could only gradually come to be executed. Olmütz was felt as deeply by us as by any other; nevertheless, we did not act like drunken demagogues, but like responsible politicians who saw the wisdom of eating cold the dish of their revenge."

Frederick William had now been more than ever struck by Bismarck's speeches at Erfurt and Berlin, and he felt doubly convinced that the Knight of the Mark was "an egg out of which he could hatch a

Minister." Already in August, 1848, the King had been strongly advised to give him a portfolio, though his inclination to do so then finally yielded to the opposition of those who urged that Herr von Bismarck was too inexperienced and unpopular, and at the same time somewhat too much of a Hotspur. But with the hatching process his Majesty now determined to delay no longer, and accordingly he offered Bismarck the post of secretary, *cum spe succedendi*, to the Prussian member of the resuscitated Diet at Frankfort, where he would have ample opportunity of further testifying the attachment to Austria which his vindication of Olmütz had revealed. Another man might have hesitated before accepting a post for which previous training had not specially prepared him. But Bismarck at once said "yes," and now his foot was at last on the lowest rung of the ladder by which he was to climb to such undreamt of heights of achievement.

# CHAPTER III.

## AT THE GERMAN DIET.

Character of the Diet—"An Ornament to Prussian Chivalry."—The Prince of Prussia—Bismarck on Diplomacy—His description of the Diet—Anecdotes—Thun—Prokesch—Rechberg—Bismarck's Letters and Despatches—His Grievances against Austria—Louis Napoleon—Foe of the Revolution—Friend of the Press—Austrian Perfidy—Anti-Prussian Majorities—The Bismarck Household—The Federal Fleet—Commercial Policy—Crimean War—Prussia's Non-interference and its Results—Bismarck at Paris—The Paris Conference—His "Splendid Report"—Incident of Neuchâtel—Bismarck's transference to St. Petersburg—"Fire and Sword."

BISMARCK had once challenged the Prussian Chamber "to point to any period in German history since the days of the Hohenstaufens, apart from the Spanish supremacy of Charles V., when Germany enjoyed greater respect abroad, with a higher degree of political unity and a greater authority in diplomacy, than during the time when the much-abused Bundestag (Diet) managed the foreign affairs of the nation." But he had not been a member of this Diet very long before he changed his opinion about it entirely.

This Diet represented exclusively the Sovereigns and Free Cities of Germany, while the Kings of Holland and Denmark also had seats in it as for their German possessions—Luxemburg and Schleswig-Holstein respectively. As being composed of the delegates of

Sovereigns, it bore a certain analogy to the present Federal Council of the German Empire; but while the latter may be regarded as the Upper Chamber of the Imperial Legislature, of which the Reichstag, or popular Assembly, is the Lower, the old Diet of Frankfort formed a council-board of Monarchs only, and was not a law-making body for the nation at large. The Diet, in fact, was a kind of standing diplomatic Congress, dealing with the mutual relations of the various States composing it, as well as with the foreign policy of the entire Confederation.

Bismarck's connection with this very peculiar body lasted for about eight years (May, 1851, to January, 1859). He had gone to Frankfort as Secretary to the Prussian member of the Diet, but it was not long before he took the place of his chief, General von Rochow, who thus wrote of his successor:—

"He is beyond question an ornament to Prussian chivalry, the pride of those patriotic spirits who work unceasingly with courage and devotion for the splendour of the Crown, and for the honour and safety of the Fatherland. 'I do not even hesitate to assert that such a person is in many respects too good for this post, in so far, namely, as such approved qualities seem more especially adapted for energetic, independent action, for a very high position in the Fatherland. . . ."

General surprise was felt, especially in red-tape circles, that such an important post should have been conferred on a man but thirty-seven years of age, who had only one decoration (the Humane Society's Medal), who had never passed his final State examination, who had been branded as "the mediæval spirit in the flesh," and who, above all things, had never received any diplomatic training. This surprise was even shared by the Prince of Prussia, who said to General von Rochow:

"And is this Lieutenant of Landwehr, then, really going to be our member of the Diet?" Little did the Prince of Prussia then dream what was still to be done for him by this Landwehr Lieutenant. The world had always believed that it required a special training to fit a man for diplomacy; but see what Bismarck himself wrote on the subject to his wife only a few days after his arrival in Frankfort:—

"There is nothing here but mutual distrust and espionage; and then if there was only anything to spy out and conceal! Nothing but miserable trifles do these people concern themselves about; and the diplomatists here strike me as being infinitely more ridiculous with their important ponderosity concerning gathered rags of gossip than even a member of the Second Chamber in the full-consciousness of his dignity. If foreign events do not occur, and these we superhumanly clever beings of the Bund can neither foretell nor direct, I know very well what we shall have arrived at in one, two, or five years' time, and am prepared to reach the same end in twenty-four hours, if only the others will be truthful and sensible for one single day. I never doubted that they all cook with water, but such plain, barefaced water-soup, without even the faintest trace of stock, astonishes me. Send the village clerk or the toll-keeper here; and, after they have been properly washed and combed, I will make a sensation with them amongst the diplomats. I am making giant strides at the art of saying nothing in a great many words. No one, not even the most malicious democrat, can form a conception of the charlatanism and self-importance of our assembled diplomacy."

To his friend, the Editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, he also wrote:—

"It is incredibly dull here. Under the mask of a roystering sort of *bonhomie*, the Austrians intrigue, . . . and seek to play us out with the fiddle-faddle matters of form which have hitherto been our sole occupation. The men of the minor States are mostly mere caricatures of periwig diplomatists, who at once put on their official visage if I merely beg of them a light to my cigar, and who study their words and looks with Regensburg care when they ask for the key of the lavatory. . . . With us

Prussians each man sings his own song, slanders the others, and writes special reports to Berlin. . . . But if ever I come to stand on my own legs here, I shall either cleanse my field of weeds or go home again more than suddenly."

Bismarck had not been long at Frankfort before he began to get rid of all his youthful illusions, such as they were, with regard to Austria. Schwarzenberg had been credited with saying at Olmütz: "*Il faut avilir la Prusse pour en suite la démolir;*" and it really seemed to Bismarck as if this were also the policy of the Austrian President of the Diet, Count Thun, who treated his Prussian colleague with the utmost rudeness and contempt. Take the following picture, from Bismarck's own hand, of how things were done at the Diet :—

"Count Thun displays in his conduct at meetings of the Diet the same non-observance of forms which generally characterises him. He presided in a short jacket of summer material, buttoned up to conceal the absence of a waistcoat; he had on an insignificant pretence at a necktie, and wore nankeen trousers; while his mode of delivery was that of conversation. The proceedings of the Committee are less important in themselves [than the sittings of the Diet], and are a trial of patience, owing to the conduct of the Austrian member. Count Thun presides in most cases, and as he does not study beforehand the papers that are handed in, he only becomes acquainted with their contents by literally reading them to the Committee from beginning to end; an operation which sometimes lasts several hours, during which the Count recites with an enviable pair of lungs, while Herr von Schele goes to sleep, Herr von Nostitz reads a book under the table, and General Xylander, who sits next to me, draws new and fantastic designs for guncarriages on his blotting-paper. . . . I have represented to Count Thun the impossibility of this mode of carrying on business; but he only pretended, in a real Austrian manner, that he could not conceive what I was aiming at, nor how it could be managed differently. . . . Remonstrance only makes him rude. . . . He was so violent yesterday in the committee towards Herr von Schele that the latter charged me to challenge him; but I preferred to act the mediator and to settle the matter peacefully, although a different issue would doubtless

have been more piquant. In return for my first visit in May he only sent his card, and since then he has never been to my house, and has never returned my numerous visits, not even the official ones. When I go to him on business, he lets me wait in the ante chamber only to tell me that he has just had a very interesting visit from an English newspaper correspondent. He never rises from his seat to receive anybody, and never offers one a chair, whilst he himself remains sitting—smoking hard. I only tell your Excellency this to amuse you; I regard this rare specimen of a diplomatist with the calm of a naturalist, and flatter myself that I have contributed something towards his social polish, at least in his behaviour towards myself."

The successor of Count Thun, as President of the Diet, was Baron Prokesch, and of him Bismarck once told the following story:—

"Prokesch was not at all the man for me. He had brought with him from the East the trick of the most miserable intrigues. Truth was a matter of absolute indifference to him. I remember once in a large company, there was some talk of an Austrian statement which did not square with the truth. Prokesch raised his voice and said, so that I should hear him distinctly, 'If that were not true, I should have been *lying* (and he emphasised the word) in the name of the Imperial-Royal Government.' He looked me straight in the face. I returned the look, and said, quietly, 'Quite so, your Excellency.' He was obviously shocked; but when, on looking round, he perceived nothing but down-dropped eyes and solemn silence, which meant to say that I was in the right, he turned on his heel and went into the dining-room where covers were laid. After dinner he had recovered himself, and came across to me with a full glass, for otherwise I should have supposed that he was going to call me out. He said, 'Come now; let us be friends.' 'Why not?' said I; 'but the protocol must *of course* be altered.' 'You are incorrigible,' he replied, smiling. It was all right. The protocol *was* altered, so that they recognised that it had contained an untruth."

Baron Prokesch was in turn succeeded by Count Rechberg, who cordially disliked Prussia and its astute representative, but did his best all the same to keep on amicable terms with his colleagues. Both officially and

socially there was, however, plenty of friction between the two. On one occasion things came to such a pitch that Count Rechberg, entirely losing his self-control, passionately exclaimed, "One of my friends shall wait on you in the morning." "Why all this unnecessary delay?" Bismarck coolly replied. "In all probability you have a pair of pistols handy. Let us settle the matter immediately. While you are getting the things ready I shall write a report about the whole transaction, which, in case I am killed, I request you to forward to Berlin." Both set about their work. When Bismarck had finished he handed the sheet to Count Rechberg, requesting him to examine it. Rechberg's passion had in the meantime given way to sober reflection. After having perused the report, he said, "What you say is quite correct; but is it really worth while to fight a duel for such a reason?" "That is exactly my opinion," was Bismarck's answer, and the matter ended.

On another occasion Count Rechberg called on his Prussian colleague to show him a despatch from his Government instructing the Count to vote with Prussia at the next meeting of the Diet. Bismarck read the document and returned it to the Count, saying, "This is evidently a mistake." Rechberg in his turn looked at the sheet and changed colour. Instead of the official letter, he had, by mistake, handed to Bismarck the secret instructions he had received concurrently, calling upon him, while openly countenancing Prussia, to use his utmost endeavours to cause the other German States to vote against the measure. For a moment both statesmen looked at one another in silence. Then Bismarck said, "Don't be upset. You never intended giving me the letter. *Ergo*, you never

gave it me; *ergo*, I know nothing about the whole matter."

For the Frankfort period of Bismarck's career there is rich biographical material in the shape of the letters to his own relatives (chiefly wife and sister), as well as his official despatches to Berlin, which have already been given to the world in several volumes. Charming specimens of epistolary style, the former, naturally enough, show us more of the man than the diplomatist; show us what deep veins of sentiment, of poetry, of romance, of philosophy—all beautifully blended—lurked in his rich and varied nature. What a traveller, too, he was all over Europe—now sitting at the feet of old Metternich on the Johannisberg, imbibing at once the wisdom and the wines of this dismantled Gamaliel of the monarchists, and now revelling in the glories of the Rhine or the Danube, the Steppes of Hungary, the game-abounding forests of Sweden, the quaint old-world beauties of Holland, or the charms of sunny France. These were at once his *Lehrjahre* and his *Wanderjahre* combined; and if anyone wants to read between the lines of Bismarck's political life let him turn to his familiar letters, of which there is a good English translation.

These letters are most characteristic and interesting in their way, but scarcely more so than the diplomatic despatches which he addressed to his Government, and which may be described by as far the most masterly productions of the kind that were ever penned. As specimens of German prose they are not excelled by anything that was ever written by Schiller or by Heine.*

* In the Prussian Chamber, soon after their publication, Professor von Sybel, the historian of the "Founding of the German

As sketches of contemporary statesmen and diplomatists they show a power of penetrating and of painting character unsurpassed by Thucydides or La Bruyère. As monuments of practical wisdom they throw the political memorials of the Prince Consort deep into the shade; and as *materiaux pour sérvir* they form historical reading at once interesting and authentic.

I think it was Bismarck who once said that those who make history seldom write it, and that those who write it rarely understand it. But, during his stay at Frankfort, Bismarck himself had already begun to make history by the very way in which he wrote about and recorded current events—so firm and compulsive was his grasp of every subject. *Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.* All the highest qualities of the logician, the stylist, the historian, and the practical statesman seemed to be at his command. Though nominally as yet but the instrument, and not the initiator, of his country's policy, it is certain that these wonderful reports of his from Frankfort exercised a strong controlling influence on the opinions of the King and his Ministers. Indeed, his thoughts and arguments at this time acquired the force of positive acts. True, he completed his great life-task by means of "blood and iron"; but he began it, and more than half carried it through, with pen and ink.

The Austrians were not long in discovering that, in Herr von Bismarck, they had to do with a man firmly determined to resist their claims to lord it over Prussia. He refused to attend a mass for the soul of the man (Schwarzenberg) who had threatened to "abase Prussia

Empire," pronounced these despatches of Bismarck to possess "a classic worth unsurpassed by the best German prose writers of any age."

and then abolish her"; and within a short year of his arrival in Frankfort he had on various occasions declared that "before he could recommend the adoption of such and such a policy at Berlin, the question would have first to be decided by an appeal to the sword." One of the very few questions which seemed to unite the rival Powers was the recognition of Louis Napoleon as Emperor, a year after his *coup d'état*, on condition of his observing existing treaties and keeping the peace. By her independent action England had no doubt forced the hand of the German Powers; but the latter, at least, were only too glad to welcome this reassertion of the monarchical principle across the Rhine. For their recognition of the French Empire was but a plank, so to speak, in the common platform on which they had taken their stand to combat the results of the Revolution.

This was their strongest, almost their only, bond of real union, and yet they quarrelled dreadfully over the means by which this common object should be achieved. Bismarck was anything but friendly to the Press, yet he would not agree to the Austrian methods of muzzling it. For by this time he had come to perceive that a free Press in Prussia might prove a powerful means of helping him to resist the pretensions of Austria; and of the two evils—a domineering Austria, or a dictatorial Press—he looked upon the latter as the lesser. Before coming to Frankfort he had longed, as we saw, like Khalif Omar, to destroy the art of printing as the choice weapon of Anti-Christ. But now he wrote:—

"'The Federal policy which is precisely and specifically necessary to Prussia can only gain in strength by publicity and frank discussion. In the Press truth will not come to light through the

mists conjured up by the mendacity of subsidised newspapers until the material wherewith to expose all the mysteries of the Bund shall be supplied to the Prussian Press, with unrestricted liberty to utilise it."

At the same time he urged Prussia to show the cold shoulder to every minor German State—like Brunswick, for example—which continued to coquet with democracy. At the instigation of Austria, the Prince of Lippe had cancelled the constitution wrung from him by the Revolution, and the treatment of this subject in the Diet showed how, even in a question of this kind, Austria intrigued against her Prussian rival.

"I have already told you," wrote Bismarck to his chief, "of the double game played by Prokesch in the affair of Lippe. State-Councillor Fischer" (the reactionary protagonist of the Prince), "a portly and somewhat ungainly personage, to whom I explained the true state of the case, was so utterly shocked by the Austrian perfidy of which he discovered himself to have been the dupe, that he gave expression to his moral indignation in gestures so violent as made him collapse before my eyes with the *chaise-longue* on which he was sitting, and lie stretched on the floor, in equal despair of humanity and of the solidity of our joiner-work here."

But the most exasperating intrigues of the Austrians were those by which they sought to secure an anti-Prussian majority in the Diet. Bismarck held it to be a crying injustice that the thirty-four minor States, with an aggregate population less than that of Prussia, should dispose of fifteen votes to her one, and it followed that the predominant Power in the Diet would be that which could command the suffrages of the petty Sovereigns. By hook or by crook, Austria generally contrived to do this; yet, while afraid openly to brave the displeasure of this Power by voting with its rival, the representatives of these petty States would often come and squeeze the hand of their Prussian colleague

in silent gratitude for the resolute and manful way in which he dared to resist and counteract the common tyrant. "On coming here four years ago," wrote Bismarck in 1855, "I certainly was no opponent of Austria in principle, but I should have had to disavow every drop of my Prussian blood had I wished to preserve anything even like a moderate predilection for Austria as understood by her present rulers."

And here let me interpose the following extract from a letter written about this time by John Lothrop Motley, who had returned to Europe to pursue his historical studies, and resumed acquaintance at Frankfort with his old fellow-student of Goettingen :—

"The Bismarcks are as kind as ever. It is one of those houses where everyone does what one likes. The show apartments where they receive formal company are on the front of the house. Their living-rooms, however, are a *salon* and dining-room at the back, opening upon the garden. Here there are young and old, grandparents and children and dogs all at once; eating, drinking, smoking, piano-playing, and pistol-firing (in the garden), all going on at the same time. It is one of those establishments where every earthly thing that can be eaten or drunk is offered you; porter, soda-water, small beer, champagne, burgundy, or claret are about all the time, and everybody is smoking the best Havana cigars every minute."

Bismarck had predicted that Heine's song—

"O, Bund, thou hound,
Thou art not sound"

would soon come to be adopted as the national anthem; and never had the Germans felt more inclined to do so than when the Diet, after squabbling for more than a year over the question of the Federal Fleet, decided to have it sold by auction rather than that it should prove the cause of a fratricidal war. Germany, indeed, must have fallen into a very lamentable state of political

chaos when the symbol of unity and the instrument of naval defence proved such an apple of irreconcilable discord. Nor did the proposal that Austria should command in the Mediterranean, Prussia in the Baltic, and the other States in the German Ocean, result in anything but proof of the fact that, within little more than a year of Olmütz, the old conflicting tendencies of an Austrian "Grand Germany," of a restricted Prussian "Union," and a Middle-State "Trias," again manifested themselves in the Diet with redoubled force.

But the commercial policy of the nation divided the Diet even more than the naval question had done. Conversing with Bismarck on the former subject, Count Thun compared Prussia with a man who had once won 100,000 thalers in a lottery, and then cast up his domestic accounts on the assumption that his luck would be repeated every year. To which Bismarck replied that, "if these ideas were also entertained at Vienna, he foresaw that Prussia would again have to try the lottery referred to, *i.e.*, war; and whether or not she drew another prize would rest with God." Up to the year 1848, as Bismarck wrote, "Austria had allowed Prussian policy to prevail throughout Germany in return for Prussia's support in all European questions." In conformity with this agreement, Prussia, with her free-trade tendency, had been the leader in the commercial field at the head of a Zollverein of eighteen States. Failing to find an entrance, on her own terms, into this Customs-Union, Austria had cast about to establish a rival Zollverein, but nothing would induce the Northern Power to yield its ground. Bismarck had been sent to Vienna on a special mission (for his activity at Frankfort was frequently diversified with official visits to the German Courts, which enabled

him to acquire such a comprehensive insight into men and things throughout the entire Fatherland), and he made it clear to the youthful Francis Joseph that Prussia must be allowed to have her own way in the domain of trade and commerce. "When in Vienna," Bismarck wrote, "I did all I could to render the relations between the two Cabinets as friendly as possible —without, however, yielding anything in the matter of the Zollverein."

Fortunately for Prussia, the attention of her rival now began to be absorbed by the troubles in the East which eventually resulted in the Crimean War. On the strength of the tacit agreement already referred to, Austria now expected that she would enjoy the staunch support of her German rival as against Russia. But what was her surprise to find that Prussia had no intention of doing anything of the kind. "This policy of yours will conduct you to another Jena," remarked the French Ambassador at Frankfort to Herr von Bismarck. "Why not to another Leipzig or another Waterloo?" haughtily replied the Prussian member of the Diet. As a matter of fact, Prussia's policy during the Crimean War ultimately led to a Sadowa and a Sedan—victories which proved far more beneficial to Germany than either Leipzig or Waterloo had ever done. For Bismarck had already begun to look very far ahead. He saw that a conflict with Austria was inevitable, and that the wisest thing which Prussia could do in those circumstances was to secure the continuance of Russia's good-will. Had Prussia, yielding to the importunities of her German rival, joined the Western Powers in their conflict with Nicholas I., it is pretty certain that Russia would not have stood by with folded arms, as she did in 1866 and 1870, and allowed the armies of King William to

become the architects of the new German Empire at Königgrätz and Sedan.

It was from no antipathy to France or England that Bismarck fought so hard and successfully at Frankfort for Prussia's non-intervention in the Russian War.* His motives were those of pure expediency. "What has Austria done for us," he wrote, "that we should do police service gratis for her?" Austria did her very utmost to mould the Diet to her bellicose designs, while Baron Bunsen, the Prussian Minister in London, was no less eager to see his country side with the Western allies. Frederick William IV. had a strange weakness for sentimental politicians of the Bunsen stamp, but fortunately for Prussia her foreign policy was now to a great extent inspired by a utilitarian statesman like Bismarck, who wrote:—

"Although a war with that Empire (Russia) would be a serious matter for us, I should not attempt to say anything against it if it held out the prospect of yielding us a prize worthy of us. But the very notion appals me that we may plunge into a sea of trouble and danger on behalf of Austria, for whose sins the King displays as much tolerance as I only hope God in Heaven will one day show towards mine. . . . The interest of Prussia is my only rule of action, and had there even been any prospect of our promoting this interest by taking part in the war, I should certainly never have been one of its opponents."

The attitude of Germany to the Crimean War was one of the very few questions on which Bismarck was able to head a majority against Austria, and there can

* "I am really at a loss to know," wrote Bismarck once, to his chief, Baron Manteuffel, "what could have induced me to act as I am said to have done, seeing that not only with both the Bentincks, but also with Sir Alexander Malet (English Minister at Frankfort), I have always been on the best footing, and seeing also that in general, as your Excellency knows, my sympathies for England are livelier than for any other country after my own."

be no doubt that his successful resistance to her designs formed one of the conditions *sine quâ non* of his subsequent achievements.

In the autumn of 1855, while as yet the Crimean War was in progress, Bismarck paid a flying visit to Paris, where he first made the personal acquaintance of Napoleon, as well as of Queen Victoria, at a grand ball given in her Majesty's honour at Versailles. The Queen described him in her diary as "very Prussian and *Kreuz-Zeitung*."

"The Emperor," wrote Bismarck, "conversed with me chiefly about the King's health, and also paid me some flattering personal compliments. There was no mistaking it that we Prussians, in comparison with other foreigners, were treated with great consideration."

This was certainly more than the Powers did when they met in conference at Paris to discuss the results of the Crimean War. To this Conference Prussia was admitted, but only after she had been kept cooling her feet for some considerable time outside. As Bismarck wrote:—

"Prussia's participation in the Paris Conference—a matter in which the mere *point d'honneur* was the chief consideration for us—was opposed by Austria more persistently than by any other Power, with the object of lowering Prussia in the eyes of Germany by excluding her from the conclave of Great Powers."

Soon after the Peace of Paris, Bismarck embodied his views of the European situation in a paper of such masterly grasp and insight that it came to be known as the *Pracht-Bericht*, or "Splendid Report." Its essence lay in the following ominous passage:—

"Every now and then for the last thousand years, and every century since the time of Charles V., German Dualism has settled its disputes by an internal war; and in the present century, too,

this is the only way in which the clock of our development can be wound up and set. . . . *It is my conviction that at no distant time we shall have to fight with Austria for our very existence, and that it is not in our power to obviate this.*"

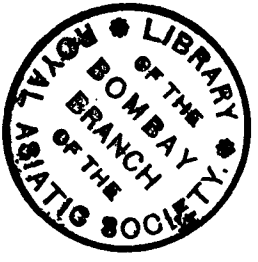
He clearly foretold the two campaigns which were to drive Austria in turn out of Italy and Germany, and conjured his Government to make a friend of Napoleon, nor think for a moment of standing up in defence of Austria, with whomsoever the latter Power might become embroiled.

"For even if we were on the winning side, for what should we have fought? For Austrian preponderance in Germany, and for the wretched phantom called Confederation! . . . And if I am right in this, though after all it is more a matter of belief than of proof, it is not possible for Prussia to carry her self-denial so far as to stake her own existence for the integrity of Austria in a struggle which I, for my part, cannot but regard as hopeless."

Bismarck's belief in the inevitability of a struggle with Austria was only deepened by the attitude of this Power to the quarrel between Prussia and her revolted Swiss dependency of Neuchâtel. "Austria," he wrote, "did all she could to tie our feet with the Federal rope, in order to keep us from moving"; and it was mainly owing to Austria, acting in accord with England, that Prussia had to submit the settlement of her differences with her Swiss subjects to a European Conference at Paris, instead of bringing these subjects to submission by force of arms. The result broke the heart, or at any rate impaired the reason, of Frederick William IV., who soon thereafter had to resign his sceptre into the hands of his brother, the Prince of Prussia; and the latter had not been long installed as Regent before he saw fit to withdraw Bismarck from Frankfort and send him to St. Petersburg.

Bismarck received the news of his transference (29th

January, 1859) from a post where he had so long and so valiantly stood in the breach against Austria soon after Napoleon had indulged in his famous New Year's Day utterance to the Austrian ambassador—a remark which portended war. In Austria's impending difficulty Bismarck beheld Prussia's opportunity to emancipate herself, once and for all, from the tutelage of her domineering rival. "I see," he wrote, "in our relations with the Bund an infirmity of Prussia, which, sooner or later, we shall have to cure '*ferro et igni*,' unless we take advantage betimes of a favourable season to employ a healing remedy against it." But the Prince Regent could not yet be brought to take this extreme view of the matter; and in the meantime he deemed it safer to transfer the advocate of this "fire and sword" policy from the banks of the Main to the banks of the Neva.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# CHAPTER IV.

## AMBASSADOR.

"Placed in Ice"—A Great Favourite—The Italian War—Prussia's Attitude—Peace of Villafranca—The German Question—Napoleon's Aims—The "New Era"—King William's Coronation—Army Reforms—Conflict between Crown and Chamber—Wanted a "Parliament-Tamer"—Appointment to Paris—In London—"He means what he says"—A Warning from Napoleon.

BISMARCK himself described his transference from Frankfort to St. Petersburg by saying that he had been "placed in ice"—*kaltgestellt*—the phrase applied to a bottle of champagne when plunged into a pail of ice. To none can the phrase have appeared more appropriate than to the Prince Regent of Prussia, who still regarded the author of the "Splendid Report" and the "Little Book"—another of his masterly despatches—as a little too much of a Hotspur to act as the spokesman of his country at the Diet during the impending struggle between Austria on one side and France and Italy on the other.

Bismarck presented his credentials at St. Petersburg on his forty-fourth birthday, and here he remained "in ice" for about three years—a period sufficiently long, one would think, for cooling purposes, especially in the climate of Russia. He at once leapt into the position of first favourite among all his diplomatic colleagues at the Court of Alexander II. It was known that the new Envoy was a warm admirer of the late Emperor

(Nicholas) and, as such, an opponent of the anti-Russian Liberalism of Berlin. It was further known that during his stay at Frankfort he had been the persistent adversary of his Austrian colleague, and that, in spite of the Austrian sympathies of most of his friends and partisans, he had quitted the Federal City as the sworn foe of the House of Hapsburg. "That was the best introduction," said a native writer, "which Herr von Bismarck could have brought with him, for hatred of our 'ungrateful' *protégé* of 1849 was then the password of our society, as well as of our diplomacy and its new leader, Prince Gortchakoff."

"They are very kind to me here," Bismarck himself wrote, "but in Berlin Austria and all the dear brothers of the Bund are intriguing to get me away; and yet I am so well-behaved." And again: "I was invited to dinner here (at Peterhof). The Emperor was very cordial at our meeting, embraced me, and showed a sincere and unmistakable pleasure at seeing me again." From Warsaw: "What can be done for us is done, and to pleasure-loving people it is here like being in Abraham's bosom." Bismarck flattered the Russians by learning a little of their language, while he also moved their admiration no less by his prowess as a rifle-shot than by his doughtiness as a diner-out, and a capacity to drink all his boon companions under the table. But "it was at St. Petersburg that I got my first shake," as he afterwards confessed.

He had been sent to St. Petersburg to watch the course of affairs in Russia, but what he followed with even a keener interest was the progress of the war in Italy. On the very day that Napoleon made his entry into Genoa (12th May, 1859), Bismarck had again written to his chief at Berlin, urging him to profit by the

European conjuncture to vindicate for Prussia her proper position of authority in Germany; and news of the battle of Magenta reached him at Moscow, whence he hastened back to his post to be ready for all emergencies. There, to his great disappointment, he learned from his Government that—

"Supported by a strong display of military force, we mean, at the proper moment, to bring the question of peace before the Great Cabinets, and to proceed with our mediation on the principle of seeking to maintain the territorial integrity of Austria in Italy."

The Prussian army—part of it, at least—was mobilised to give effect to this proposed mediation; but if Bismarck could have had his will, he would never have risked the healthy bones of a single Landwehr-man to save Austria from utter defeat and disintegration. A week after Solferino he wrote:—

"Our policy drifts more and more into the Austrian wake; and when we have once fired a shot on the Rhine, it is all over with the Italian-Austrian war, and in its place a Prussian-French one comes on the scene, in which Austria, after we have taken the burden from her shoulders, stands by us or fails to stand by us just so far as her own interests require. She will certainly not allow us to play a very brilliant victor's part. As God wills! After all, everything here below is only a question of time, nations and individuals, folly and wisdom, war and peace; they come and go like the waves, but the sea remains. There is nothing on this earth but hypocrisy and jugglery; and whether fever or grape-shot tear off this fleshy mask, fall it must sooner or later; and then, granted that they are equal in height, a likeness will, after all, manifest itself between a Prussian and an Austrian, making it difficult to distinguish them. The stupid and the clever, too, look pretty much alike when their bones are well picked. With such views, a man certainly gets rid of his specific patriotism; but it would indeed be a subject for despair if our salvation depended on it."

But the sudden conclusion of the Peace of Villafranca saved him from all further apprehensions on this

score. Prussia had been preparing to take the field, if necessary, on behalf of Austria, but the two Powers could not agree as to the supreme command of the Federal forces. This command the Hohenzollerns would not cede to the Hapsburgs, while the latter, with equal stubbornness, had set their hearts against granting to Prussia a military privilege which could only increase her influence with the minor States. Never had the inveterate jealousy between the two Powers proved more disastrous—to Austria this time. For rather than yield to her rival on a question of mere military form, Austria hastened to accept the humiliating conditions of Napoleon. Francis Joseph declared that he had lost Lombardy through the faithlessness of his natural ally. The Prince Regent was indignant, and Bismarck, at heart, delighted. For the war had revealed weaknesses in the Austrian army which would only redound to the good of Prussia, when the proper time came. "I am sorry for the Austrian soldiers," he wrote. "How must they be led, that they get beaten every time!" And again: "It is a lesson for our Ministers, which they, in their obstinacy, will not take to heart."

By many of his countrymen Bismarck at this time was supposed to be in virtual league with Napoleon, who had declared to his army that its victorious march had been arrested by the menacing attitude of Prussia. Certainly, before leaving Frankfort, he had warmly recommended his Government to conciliate the French, but he had never gone the length of wishing to do this at the sacrifice of a single inch of German soil. "If," he wrote, "I have sold myself to a Devil, it is to a Teutonic, and not a Gallic one."

It is certain that Napoleon coveted the left bank of

the Rhine, and that for a consideration of this kind he would have been prepared to help Prussia against Austria, just as the promise of Nice and Savoy had been the price of his alliance with Italy. For the saw-dust "man of destiny" was in reality nothing but a crowned *condottiere*, willing and eager to sell the sword of France to the highest bidder. But the blood of all true Germans—and none were truer than the Prince Regent of Prussia and his representative at St. Petersburg—boiled at the very thought of such a territorial transaction; and this Napoleon was clearly given to understand when he came to Baden (June, 1860) to meet the Regent of Prussia and several of his fellow-Sovereigns. Biting his lips, the Imperial robber returned to Paris with a feeling that the fates were decidedly against him in Germany.

In the following January (1861), the death of his demented brother at last enabled the Prince Regent to ascend the throne of Prussia as William I., and inaugurate the "New Era." It was expected by many that King William would at once summon Bismarck to his side, but the former was still as irresolute as the latter was indifferent. To a friend Bismarck wrote:—

"For the rest, I have reconciled myself to the life here, do not find the winter at all as bad as I thought, and ask no change in my position till, if it is God's will, I retire to Schönhausen, or Reinfeld, to set the carpenter at work on my coffin without unnecessary haste. The ambition to be Minister quits a man now-a-days for manifold reasons, which are not all suited for written communication."

But, though still without a portfolio, Bismarck had now become one of his Sovereign's chief counsellors, and he was summoned from St. Petersburg to Baden-Baden to discuss the situation. "I have been active in Coblence and here," he wrote from Berlin (October),

"for German policy, and not without success, as far as the momentary feeling is concerned." On his way back to St. Petersburg, he figured at the coronation of King William at Königsberg (October, 1861).

The Prussian monarchy had been founded in 1701 by Frederick I., who placed the crown upon his own head, without the assistance of any representative of the Church, in token that he had received it direct from the King of Kings; but up till now all his successors had contented themselves with the simple *Huldigung*, or tendering of homage, from the various estates of the realm, as a sufficiently symbolic substitute for the expensive ceremony of coronation. The Revolution of 1848, however, had tended to impair, or, at least, darken the doctrine of divine right; and it was to emphasise the inviolability of this sacred right in the eyes of his subjects, who had meanwhile wrested a constitution from the Crown, that William I. determined to follow the example of the founder of his Royal line. Little, certainly, did he then dream that, within ten short years of this time, the staunchest supporter of his claims to the doctrine of divine right as King would be in a position to offer him the crown of an Emperor in the historic palace of the Kings of France.

William I. had not been long upon the Throne before he began to devote himself, heart and soul, to the reorganisation of his army. The mobilisation of that army during the Italian campaign had revealed serious defects, and unless these could be remedied Prussia might as well retire from the field of German politics altogether. The King wanted the infantry to be simply doubled in numbers, and the cavalry increased by ten regiments. But he could come to no agreement on the subject with his Chamber. The latter was

quite willing to vote the necessary funds on the supposition that the proposed increase of the army was only to be of a temporary kind; but when it found that the King meant this change to be permanent, it could not be brought to sign away so much of its financial power.

Consequently, the Crown and the Chamber were soon in a state of bitter conflict. As the Chamber would not yield, and the Cabinet could not make it do so, the King dissolved the former and dismissed the latter (March, 1862). On the urgent advice of his retiring Premier, Prince Antony of Hohenzollern, his Majesty summoned Bismarck to Berlin, but found him in no mood as yet to undertake the task of "Parliament-Tamer." Above all things, his health at this time was bad. "I have become mentally so weak since my illness," he wrote, "that I have lost all the elastic force necessary for stirring occasions. Three years ago I should still have made a serviceable Minister; but now I feel like a sickly circus-rider. Apart from all political drawbacks, I do not feel equal to so much excitement and work." The King pressed him very hard, but Bismarck pleaded bad health, and the necessity for further preparation before entering into Ministerial harness. Above all things, he had not yet completed his study of the "man of destiny," and prepared his ground at Paris. This argument weighed with the King, and he at once transferred his future Premier from the Neva to the Seine, meanwhile appointing Prince Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen chief of the new Cabinet.

Bismarck had hardly got settled in Paris when he took a run over to London to feel his ground there and get the political light of the place into his eyes—all in preparation for the task which he knew to be await-

ing him. Here let me ~~here~~ quote a passage from the "Memoirs" of Count Vitzthum, then Saxon Envoy in London:—

"Among the princely personages who visited the International Exhibition in London was the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar. The Russian Envoy, Baron Brunnow, gave a great dinner in his honour, and I was present. Among the guests was the Prussian Minister in Paris, Herr von Bismarck-Schönhausen, who after dinner had a long conversation with Disraeli. The leader of the Opposition gave me the following account of this conversation:—'I shall shortly be compelled,' the Prussian statesman spoke nearly in these terms—'to undertake the presidency of the Prussian Government. My first care will be to reorganise the army, with or without the help of Parliament. The King has with right imposed this task upon himself, but with his present counsellors he cannot discharge it. With the army placed in a position to enforce respect, I shall seize upon the first pretext for declaring war against Austria, breaking up the German Federation, subjecting the minor States, and of giving Germany national unity under Prussia's guidance. I have come here in order to tell the Queen's Ministers this.' Disraeli's commentary on this programme, since carried out step by step, was: 'Take care of that man. He means what he says.'"

"He means what he says." But, "*Il n'est pas un homme sérieux*," was what the Emperor said of the Prussian Ambassador after similarly listening to his schemes, while warning him "not to forget the fate of Polignac." Bismarck did not long enjoy the beauties of France, with its health-giving idleness at Bordeaux, Biarritz, Bayonne, and other holiday resorts. While roaming about among the Pyrenees he was overtaken by a telegram (middle of September) summoning him to return at once to Berlin. The Chamber had again rejected the King's demands, and his Majesty had replied by at once appointing Bismarck to the post of Minister President. The die was cast; the fate of Germany was now sealed. The greatest history-maker of modern times had at last been called to begin his task.

# CHAPTER V.

## WAR WITH DENMARK.

Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg—Bismarck's "Winged Words"—His own Account of the Situation—"Blood and Iron"—Constitutional Conflict—Ruling without a Budget—The "Cabinet-courier to Cassel"—Polish Insurrection—Prusso-Russian co-operation—Bismarck rebuffs England—Conciliates France and Russia—"Jack, my Dear"—The *querelle d'Allemand*—Congress of Sovereigns—Schleswig-Holstein Question—Wrong-doing of the Danes—Federal "Execution"—Prussia and Austria as Allies—The Danish Campaign—Düppel—London Conference—Results of the War.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S brother-in-law, the late Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, wrote in his "Memoirs":—

"In the course of September, 1862, a number of illustrious persons had met at Reinhardsbrunn and Coburg. The Queen of England, with her children, Prince Ludwig of Hesse, with his young wife (Princess Alice of England), and the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia had arrived there. It is hardly possible to describe the apprehension and terror that prevailed at that moment, even in the highest circles. Nobody could believe in a happy future for their country. Fathers and sons in all classes seemed to be at enmity with each other, and all political, and even personal, relations were demoralised and inharmonious.

"Such was the state of things when, on the 9th of October, one of the most pregnant events in the history of modern Germany took place. Herr von Bismarck was appointed President of the Cabinet and Minister of Foreign Affairs by the King. As early as the 24th of September, when Minister von der Heydt was dismissed, he had been entrusted, temporarily, and without a special portfolio, with the Presidency of the Cabinet, in place of Prince

Hohenlohe. The first of his decided actions was to withdraw the Budget for 1863 'after the House had rejected all the reorganisation items for 1862, and the Government had been compelled to presume that the same attitude would be observed as regards 1863.'

"Four great 'winged words' of Herr von Bismarck, which he is said to have uttered in the Budget Committee, flew like wildfire all over Germany, even into the most distant cottages, after the 30th September. These were 'The Catilinarian Characters' which were deeply interested in revolution in Prussia,—'a suit of armour too large for the slender body'—'Prussia's disadvantageous frontiers,' and, finally, 'blood and iron,' by which, he said, the great questions of the time would have to be decided; not by speeches and resolutions of majorities, as in 1848 and 1849. At the meeting of the National Society of Coburg, one of the Prussian members had protested, amid a storm of applause, against the rumoured policy of 'blood and iron,' contending that Prussia would never take up arms except against foreign Powers."

Such was the general state of things in Germany when Bismarck was called to the helm of affairs in Berlin; and now (for a man's best biographer is ever himself) let us listen to his own confessions:—*

"When I arrived in Berlin on September 19, 1862, summoned by his Majesty from Paris, his abdication lay already signed on his writing-table. I refused to take office. The document was ready to be handed to the Crown Prince. He asked me whether I was prepared to govern against the majority of the national representation even without a Budget. I answered 'Yes,' and the letter of abdication was destroyed.

"But even then the struggle was not over. A fortnight after the King wrote to me from Baden in a state of intense despondency. I went to meet him on his way back to Berlin, and waited for him at Jüterbog Station. The platform was quite dark. I could not find the Royal carriage. In those days we did not travel in special trains. At last I found the King sitting in an ordinary first-class compartment. He was terribly depressed.

* These most interesting revelations Bismarck made to Dr. Hans Blum in November, 1892, when adversely criticising the Bill for reducing the term of compulsory service with the colours from three to two years.

The Queen had pointed to the lessons of history. I pointed to the Prussian officer's sword which he wore. 'What is going to happen?' he exclaimed. 'I can see far enough from the palace window to see your head fall on the scaffold, and after yours mine.'

"'Well,' I replied, 'for myself I cannot imagine a nobler death than that or on the battlefield. I should fall like Strafford, and your Majesty like Charles I., not like Louis XVI. Surely your Majesty, as captain of a company, cannot think of deserting it under fire?' 'Never,' was the reply, and the King sprang up resolute and erect. The Prussian officer's sword had carried the day, and I had won back my King. Such was the serious character of the times we then went through, and such was the stake my noble master ventured in order to lay the foundation-stone of our military organisation."

On no account would the Chamber vote the army estimates. But the army—the instrument of Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron," which promised such blessings for the whole Fatherland—was already on its legs, and could not be sent home. It had to be paid for somehow; and if the Chamber would not sanction the raising of the necessary supplies, why, then, the Government must just dispense with this constitutional authority for the course it meant to take. This was, in effect, how Bismarck looked at the question:—

"If the three legislative factors, possessing a say of equal power, could not agree to pass the Budget, what was to be done? By the oversight of those who made it, the Constitution had not provided for such a dilemma, and was the machinery of the State meanwhile to stand still for want of oil? Would the Government not incur a much more fearful responsibility before the country, if, merely because the Budget could not be passed, it sat down with folded hands, shut up its custom-houses, and allowed its huge army of officials to starve for want of pay? It had the choice of two evils, and which was the lesser of these there could, in Bismarck's mind, be no possible doubt. All constitutional life was a series of compromises, and as the Lower Chamber would not yield an inch to the Crown and the Upper House—two being here against one—there was nothing for the Government but to act, at its risk and peril, on the law of majorities."

To this budgetless policy Bismarck stuck through thick and thin, through evil and through good report; and the Chamber was the scene of continual strife, which sometimes even resulted in duels. Bismarck himself, on one occasion, sent a challenge to the famous anatomist, Professor Virchow, an ardent Radical, though the latter declined to fight. From quarrelling about high matters of substance, the Chamber and the Ministry descended into the arena of acrimonious squabbles about questions of mere form, and the deputies were repeatedly sent about their business like so many naughty children. The voice of protest and criticism, which had been silenced in Parliament, grew loud and ever louder in the Press; but the Press, in its turn, was promptly muzzled—the Constitution enabled the Government to do this in certain circumstances which it deemed to be now existent—the deputies were prosecuted, the bench was brow-beaten, the whole machinery of official coercion was set agoing, and in fact the Government began to go so far that even the Crown Prince publicly made bold to protest against its action as dangerous to the Throne and his succession to it, and fell into temporary disgrace in consequence.

Bismarck was now the best hated man in all Prussia. But the area of this concentrated hate was quick to extend to all Germany, to all Europe. For the constitutional conflict was by no means the only question which now occupied the attention of the new Prussian Premier, and increased the number of his foes. First of all, there was the trouble in Hesse-Cassel. It was the conduct of the Elector which had very nearly precipitated an appeal to arms by Prussia and Austria, just before Olmütz, and now again the constitutional quarrel between this Sovereign and his subjects threatened to

set all the members of the Diet by the ears. King William had sent to Cassel a special envoy to reason with the Elector, but the haughty despot had turned over this high emissary to two of his underlings, and continued to indulge in his old tricks.

The matter was now, therefore, put into the hands of Bismarck, who, signified to the Elector that, unless he promptly did as he was told, Prussia would take the remedy into her own hands and exact a lasting pledge against the recurrence of the evils complained of. This threat received additional force from the fact that the peremptory note containing it was carried from Berlin to Cassel by no higher diplomatist than a cabinet courier — the famous "*Feldjäger nach Kurhessen.*" Within three days after receiving it the terrified Elector had recalled his Ministers, convoked the representative assembly of his realm, and promised to dance to the tune that was played him from Berlin.

Scarcely had Bismarck thus disposed of these Hessian worries when his attention was engrossed with the insurrection which had meanwhile broken out in Russian Poland (January, 1863). He was more than amazed that the Government of the Tsar did not show more promptitude in putting this rebellion down, and he was afraid that the flames of insurrection might spread to the Polish parts of Prussia. Deeming prevention, as he ever did, to be much better than cure, he hastened to make the necessary overtures at St. Petersburg; and in February the two Governments signed a Convention authorising their troops to cross their frontiers if need be, in pursuit of fugitive rebels, while Prussia drew a strong military cordon along her eastern frontier so as to bar the westward march of the Red Spectre. The rebels in Russian Poland had not yet risen to the dignity of recognised belligerents, and, in acting as

she did, as was afterwards owned by an English statesman, Prussia had in no wise infringed her international duties.

Nevertheless, the February Convention exposed Bismarck to a perfect storm of invective, both at home and abroad, his conduct being described as barbarous and bloodthirsty in the highest degree. Western Europe was passing through one of its periodical fits of lackadaisical sentimentality, miscalled humanitarianism, and could not understand the wisdom of a Government like that of Prussia sternly performing its first and highest duty—that of maintaining law and order in its own house, and at the same time of saving it from the flames which had seized upon a contiguous tenement. By his conduct on this occasion, his simple observance of the elementary principles of government, Bismarck, as he phrased it, drew down upon himself "a whole world of wrath and hatred"; and nowhere outside of the Liberal section of the Prussian Chamber did these evil passions flare up more fiercely than in France and England. True to his accustomed *rôle*, Napoleon, of course, posed as the interested "champion of oppressed nationalities," while Lord John Russell instructed Sir Andrew Buchanan to inform Bismarck of the indignation aroused in England by Prussia's "unjustifiable intervention," and to demand a copy of the February Convention.

But such a demand was now addressed to the wrong man altogether—as Lord John discovered to his infinite surprise. The truth is that England had not yet learned the supreme wisdom of letting other nations mind their own business, and of strictly confining herself to the management of her own. As a consequence, the Western Powers did the rebellious Poles far more harm than good by their disunited policy of interces-

sion. For in the breasts of the insurrectionists they aroused hopes which they had neither the will nor the power to fulfil, and only encouraged them to a resistance which made their final suppression all the more bloody. The policy of the Western Powers was one of sentiment, but the treatment of the Polish question now revealed to them, to their no small surprise, the existence of a statesman whose first principle of action was (as it ever continued to be) that sentiment ought to have no place in politics.

In not only signing, but also suggesting, the February Convention, Bismarck had been primarily actuated by honest dread of the insurrectionary effect which the Polish rebellion might possibly produce on the eastern parts of Prussia. But, at the same time, this proffered co-operation of his with the powers at St. Petersburg also gave him a welcome opportunity of conciliating the favour of Russia. For he felt the ardently wished-for time to be near when the solution of the German question could no longer be postponed, and his whole foreign policy aimed at putting Prussia on as good a footing as possible with her non-German neighbours, so that, if she had no helping friends, she might at least have no active foes. By helping Russia to put down the Polish insurrection, he had placed that Power under an obligation which he expected it to return by an attitude of strict neutrality in the event of a conflict between Russia and Austria; and it was for the same reason that he did all he could to ingratiate himself with Napoleon, whose opposition to his schemes he had every motive to buy off. The conclusion of a Treaty of Commerce between France and the Zollverein, headed by Prussia, afforded him the means of doing this; and Napoleon was all the more grateful for the commercial advantages which Bismarck had thus accorded him, as the

latter had carried out his purpose in spite of the usual opposition and intrigues on the part of Austria.

It was about the time of the Polish insurrection and the conclusion of the Treaty with France that Bismarck sat down, amid all the Babel of a debate in the Chamber, and wrote the following English note to his old Goettingen friend, "Jack, my dear," now the brilliant historian of the Dutch Republic.

"I hate politics; but as you say truly, like the grocer hating figs, I am none the less obliged to keep my thoughts increasingly occupied with those figs. Even at this moment, while I am writing to you, my ears are full of it. I am obliged to listen to particularly tasteless speeches out of the mouths of uncommonly childish and excited politicians, and I have therefore a moment of unwilling leisure which I cannot use better than in giving you news of my welfare. I never thought that in my riper years I should be obliged to carry on such an unworthy trade as that of a Parliamentary Minister. As Envoy, although only an official, I still had the feeling of being a gentleman; as Parliamentary Minister one is a helot. I have come down in the world and hardly know how. . . . . I am sitting again in the House of Phrases, hear people talk nonsense, and end my letter. All these people have agreed to approve our treaties with Belgium, in spite of which twenty speakers scold each other with the greatest vehemence, as if each wished to make an end of the other; they are not agreed about the motives which make them unanimous; hence, alas! a regular German squabble about the Emperor's beard—*querelle d'Allemand.* . . ."

This *querelle d'Allemand* was now beginning to show signs of coming to a head. Austria had supported the Western Powers in their remonstrances with the attitude of Prussia to the Polish insurrection, as she had also sought to frustrate Prussia's Commercial Treaty between the Zollverein and France. At every step the path of Prussian policy was barred by her implacable rival. *Quousque tandem?* Bismarck asked himself, and at last he began to indulge in some very plain speaking.

"The relations of the two Powers," he said, to Count Karolyi, Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, "cannot continue on their present footing. They must change either for the better or the worse. It is the honest desire of the King's Government that they should change for the better, but if the necessary advances are not made by the Imperial Cabinet it will be requisite for Prussia to look the other alternative in the face, and to make her preparations accordingly." "Finally," wrote Count Karolyi a few weeks later, "Bismarck placed before us, in so many words, the alternative of withdrawing from Germany and transferring our centre of gravity to Ofen (Buda-Pesth), or of seeing Prussia in the ranks of our enemies on the occasion of the first European war."

Austria came forward with several schemes of Federal reform, but, in the eyes of Bismarck, they all suffered from the fatal objection that they were only calculated to aggravate the evils which they aimed at ending. None of these schemes promised the release of Prussia from the tutelage of Austria, and with nothing less than this emancipation would Prussia content herself. Her rival was not satisfied with the prospect of merely being *primus inter pares*. No; she must continue, if perchance under a different form, to be director of the German orchestra. In the summer of 1863 she summoned a grand meeting of German Sovereigns at Frankfort to consider her scheme of reform, but King William disdained to join this Congress of his fellow-monarchs, although repeatedly invited, nay, conjured, to do so.

For he knew that the scheme of reform to be laid before the Congress was such as he never could accept; and, indeed, Bismarck himself believed that Austria's only object in proposing such a scheme was to force on Prussia a pretext for retiring from the Confederation altogether, thus leaving her rival unchallenged mistress in the German field. King William, in fact, was virtually given to understand that, if he did not accept the new constitution, he would have to leave the Federal

fold. This was all the outcome of what Bismarck called the Frankfort "wind-baggery." Prussia, in effect, had got notice to quit. The hour which Bismarck knew must come, and had so long been yearning for, seemed at last on the very point of striking. But suddenly there happened something which caused the hand of Time to stand, if not, indeed, to go back.

This was the death (14th November, 1863) of Frederick VII., King of Denmark, and Duke *in* Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburg, generally called the Elbe Duchies. In the compass of a work like this it is quite impossible to detail the nature and development of what was called the Schleswig-Holstein question, one of the most complicated problems which ever engaged the attention of statesmen. It had frequently already formed a bone of bloody contention in the Duchies themselves, and more than once threatened to set all Europe on fire. The "principle of nationalities" was the thing which underlay the whole question. Here were several German provinces subject to the Crown of Denmark, much in the same way as Hanover had been subject to England, and Luxemburg to Holland; and such an unnatural relationship was bound to result in difficulty and strife. On one hand there was the very natural tendency of the Danes to assimilate their German Duchies altogether, while these Duchies, on the other, still more naturally sought to maintain intact the many ties which bound them to the German Fatherland.

By the Treaty of London (1852), to which Austria and Prussia were parties, Frederick VII. had bound himself to respect all the special rights and privileges of his German Duchies; but no sooner did he behold Prussia, the greatest champion of those rights, engrossed with her constitutional conflict, her Polish insur-

rection policy, and her other domestic troubles, than, profiting by the happy opportunity, he severed the traditional union between Schleswig-Holstein, and made other changes in clear violation of his treaty obligations. Later on, in spite of the Federal "execution" which had been decreed in Holstein-Lauenburg, the Danish Parliament passed a law incorporating Schleswig with the Kingdom of Denmark. Frederick VII. died before he could ratify this high-handed act. But this was done at once by his successor, Christian IX. (father of the Princess of Wales). This Prince's right of succession to the Danish throne had only been recognised (by the Treaty of London) on condition of his observing Denmark's obligations towards the Duchies, and with a distinct breach of these obligations he began his reign.

But a new claimant to the Crown of the Duchies now appeared in the person of Prince Frederick of Augustenburg (father of the future German Empress, Augusta Victoria), who denounced the King of Denmark's assumption of that Crown as a "usurpation and unrighteous act of violence." The claims of this Pretender found the warmest favour everywhere throughout Germany, especially in the Prussian Chamber and in the Frankfort Diet, which latter despatched a Saxo-Hanoverian army into Holstein, where the Augustenburger was presently proclaimed Duke. But how was the larger question of Schleswig, which King Christian had unjustly incorporated with Denmark, to be disposed of? Should that monarch be called upon by the Diet to undo this act of injustice, and carry out the Treaty of London? The Diet declined to do this—much to Bismarck's secret delight, for its refusal opened up to him the path of independent action. If the Diet would not seek to enforce the Treaty of London, Prussia and Austria, which had a separate agreement with Denmark

in respect of Schleswig, could at least do so. By endorsing the wrongful act of his predecessor, Christian IX. had entitled Prussia and Austria to withdraw from the Treaty of London, but it was for these Powers to say when it would suit their convenience to do so; and meanwhile they elected to stand up for its strict observance.

The Germanic Diet had declined to sanction the proposed invasion of Schleswig, while the Prussian Chamber equally refused to grant the necessary supplies—Bismarck had asked for twelve million thalers—but he cared not for either of these obstructions, exclaiming in the Chamber: "*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo!*" And now Europe was presented with the astonishing spectacle of the two Powers, which but a few months previously had been preparing almost to fly at one another's throats, advancing shoulder to shoulder against the Danes in Schleswig as the high-souled champions of the Treaty of London. By the skilful use of various arguments, Bismarck had the satisfaction of seeing Austria express her readiness to share the odium which his occupation of Schleswig evoked in Germany, and indeed in Europe. By masterly diplomacy he had managed to enlist the services of a rival Power to aid him in gaining a territorial acquisition which he had predetermined to secure for Prussia, and also discovered means of putting Austria in the wrong before the European tribunal in the quarrel which he was contriving to fix upon her.

On 1st February, 1864, the unnatural allies crossed the Eider, and by the 15th April the Prussians, under Prince Frederick Charles—to whom fell the hardest of the fighting—had stormed the redoubts of Düppel, the last bulwark of the Danes on the Schleswig mainland. As Bismarck's diplomacy had brought about the cam-

paign, so the science of General von Moltke, but lately appointed Chief of the Grand General Staff, had carried it so far to a victorious conclusion. For the first time, also, the Prussian needle-gun now began to be heard of. The Danes fought with all the splendid bravery of their race, but from the outset it was seen that they had engaged in an utterly hopeless struggle.

That they had done so was partly due to a well-founded expectation of help from England, which never came. As England's intercession on behalf of the insurrectionary Poles in the previous year had only encouraged them to a resistance which made their final repression all the more bloody, so her present sentimental espousal of the cause of the wrong-doing Danes was, to a great extent, accountable for their insensate opposition to the Austro-Prussian arms. If England dreaded an injurious predominance of Prussia in the Baltic from the dismemberment of the Danish Monarchy, it was her duty to act upon her conviction. But all she did was to buoy up the Danes with false and suicidal hopes of material assistance, and to set herself to the task of bringing "moral pressure" to bear on Prussia. All Lord John Russell's despatches on the subject Bismarck treated as so much mere "waste paper"; and England now played a part which, in the words of her own envoy at Frankfort (Sir A. Malet), "lowered our national reputation and left a stigma of egotism on the nation." With far-seeing prevision Bismarck had taken care (as we have seen) to secure the good-will both of France and Russia, and England was practically isolated in her sentimental policy of intervention.

After Düppel she called a meeting of the signatories to the Treaty of 1852. But what was the surprise of this other London Conference to hear from Bismarck that it had no ground to stand upon, seeing "that the

said Treaty had been annulled by war, which cancels all agreements between belligerent States." It was, therefore, now impossible for the Danes or their friends to appeal to this Treaty as the basis of negotiation. It was in virtue of this Treaty that the allies had invaded Schleswig; but, having done so, they were now entitled to denounce it—very specious reasoning, no doubt, but logic all the same which had been used by a man impervious to mere "moral pressure." In face of accomplished facts, what could the assembled plenipotentiaries do? "The Conference," as was said of it by Count Beust, "closed after some very animated debates, as a Black Forest clock sometimes stops after ticking more loudly than usual."

Nevertheless the Danes, though now left in the lurch by their sentimental friends, still stubbornly refused to yield; and it was only after the Prussians had performed what was perhaps the most brilliant feat of arms in the campaign, by storming the Island of Alsen from the water in the deep darkness of a summer night, that they recognised the wisdom of submission. But by this time Bismarck's demands had risen from "complete independence" to "complete separation" of the Duchies, and the Danes had no alternative but to surrender unconditionally to their German conquerors "Schleswig-Holstein, sea-surrounded," of which they had most certainly proved the unjust stewards. Thus the dream of that "*ganzes Deutschland*" sung by the soldier-poet, Arndt, had now begun to be realised. "When I was made a prince," said Bismarck once, "the King insisted on putting Alsace-Lorraine into my coat-of-arms. But I would much rather have had Schleswig-Holstein, for that is the campaign, politically speaking, of which I am proudest."

# CHAPTER VI.

## WAR WITH AUSTRIA.

Treaty of Vienna—What to do with the Duchies?—The Augustenburg Pretender—Divided Sovereignty—Convention of Gastein—Bismarck made a Count—France and Italy—Attempt to shoot Bismarck—General Manteuffel—Further Quarrels between the Allies—Prussia's Grievances—Mutual Recriminations—Napoleon's Policy—Bismarck and the King—"*Beati possidentes!*"—The God of Battles—Moltke's Strategy—Königgrätz—Anecdote of Bismarck—Peace Negotiations—The "Magnanimous Mediator"—M. Benedetti—Nestor or Hotspur?—The Peace of Nicolsburg—Napoleon's Demands—"Germany on her Feet."

By the Treaty of Vienna (30 October, 1864) the King of Denmark unconditionally surrendered the Duchies to Prussia and Austria. But now there arose the serious question—how were these Duchies to be disposed of? To begin with, the Saxons and Hanoverians, who had been told off to do "execution" for the Diet in Holstein, were now requested by Bismarck to clear out of the province, as it had been ceded to the allies who were not the mandatories of the Diet, and so were not bound to render it an account of their stewardship. Meanwhile, pending the settlement of their ultimate fate, the administration of the Duchies was vested in an Austro-Prussian Commission.

But no sooner had the two noble hounds been leashed together than they began to strain in opposite direc-

tions. The Prussians wanted to do one thing, the Austrians another. Mutual suspicion and jealousy characterised all their acts. Above all things they could not agree as to their treatment of the Duke of Augustenburg, who had now again come forward to claim the sovereignty of the conquered territory. The inhabitants themselves were for him; the Austrians supported the demonstrations in his favour; and even King William, a great stickler for legitimism, was inclined to look with favour on his claim. But Bismarck privately laughed at the idea that Prussia should have been thought capable of making such sacrifices in men and money as the war had entailed for the sake of this Augustenburg Pretender. And yet, if the latter could only have seen the wisdom of making certain military concessions to Prussia, it is not improbable that he might have become the Sovereign of a new German State.

The Diet had passed a resolution in favour of the Augustenburger, but the decisions of the Diet were things to which Bismarck had long ceased to pay the least heed. Prussia had not drawn her sword as the executor of the Diet's will, and now she could not be expected to comply with its wishes. No other course appearing practicable, Bismarck sounded Austria as to the annexation of the Duchies to Prussia, and was told that the Emperor could only consent to this on his receiving some territorial equivalent, such, for example, as the county of Glatz in Silesia. But again Bismarck scorned the very idea of restoring to Austria any portion of the soil which had been won for Prussia by the sword of Frederick the Great. Thus the relations of the allies grew worse and worse, and peace was only patched up by the provisional Convention of Gastein (14 August,

1865), which virtually vested the sovereignty of Schleswig in Prussia, and of Holstein in Austria; while King William bought up the condominate rights of his Austrian ally in Lauenburg by the payment of half a million dollars. At the same time he rewarded his "blood and iron" Minister with the title of Count.

Bismarck had been under no illusion when signing the Convention of Gastein, which he regarded as a mere stop-gap. His quarrel with Austria was already ripe enough, but he needed a little more time before taking the field to fight it out. Certain military precautions had still to be taken. But, above all things, it was necessary to secure himself of the active co-operation of Italy on one side, and of France's benevolent neutrality on the other. The latter object he achieved by another visit to the "man of destiny" at Biarritz.

He was still ruling without a Budget, his conflict with the Chamber had risen to a fiercer pitch than ever, and public feeling ran so high against him that a young man, Ferdinand Cohen or Blind, constituting himself the exponent of this feeling, attempted to shoot the Minister-President as he was passing down the Linden.* The Chamber was still clamouring for the independence of the Duchies; it refused to vote supplies for the creation of a fleet which implied the retention of Kiel; and it even went the length of pronouncing to be null and void the agreement by which the King had become possessed of Lauenburg. Then the Chamber was

* Referring once to this attempt on his life, Bismarck said: "Strange to say, on the day I was shot at I had no weapon by me, not even a stick. I was always accustomed to carry a loaded revolver in my pocket, and to go along the streets with my hand on the butt end. I should not have liked to take the long journey to eternity alone."

again dissolved. It was a time of the greatest confusion and excitement, but, in the midst of all these storms and danger, Bismarck stood unflinchingly firm to his purpose, bending everyone to his own inflexible will. "Count Bismarck," wrote General Manteuffel, commanding in Schleswig, "can only create machines or political opponents. But I will neither be one nor the other, and therefore I will go." Nevertheless he remained, and proved one of Bismarck's most effective instruments in the carrying out of his anti-Austrian policy.

"Do you mean to break the Convention of Gastein?" asked Count Karolyi of Bismarck, barely six months after the conclusion of that agreement. "No," at once replied the latter; "but, even if I did, do you suppose that I should tell you?" As a matter of fact, the Convention in question was now being broken by both sides, and the two military governors of the conquered provinces (Manteuffel and Marshal Gablenz) lived in a state of constant friction. As to their treatment of the Augustenburg Pretender, in particular, they were still woefully divided. At last, however, Bismarck's patience gave way, and, at the beginning of 1866, he communicated to Austria a long list of grievances, declaring it to be an "imperative necessity that clearness should now at last be brought into our mutual relations." To this the reply was so evasive that Manteuffel and Moltke were at once summoned to attend a Cabinet Council in Berlin.

The two Powers were already arming with more or less secrecy. On a previous occasion Bismarck had said, "One single encounter, one decisive battle, and Prussia will have it in her power to dictate conditions." But the time for this decisive encounter was not yet ripe,

and while a diplomatic correspondence, full of mutual recrimination, was passing between Vienna and Berlin, Bismarck employed himself in securing the assistance of Italy. At last, too, on 8th April, General Govone signed at Berlin a secret treaty by which Italy bound herself to take the field for Prussia should the latter have to go to war with Austria *within three months*, the stipulated price of this assistance, of course, being Venetia.

Meanwhile, Napoleon was doing his very best to fish in these very muddy and troubled waters. What he coveted above all things was the left bank of the Rhine, and now he cast about to ingratiate himself with his subjects by this territorial acquisition. Could he but help Prussia—thus he reasoned—to accomplish her ends, he would demand the cession of the Rhine as the price of his aid. Should Prussia, refusing his conditional aid, be beaten by Austria—and he at heart hoped and believed she would—then he might claim the same territory as the equivalent of his intervention in favour of the defeated. It is true that when the two disputants began to feel for their sword-hilts, Napoleon, like another Iago feigning horror at the brawl between Cassio and Roderigo, made a show of proposing that they should submit their quarrel to a European Congress —a proposal which was accepted by Prussia, but rejected by her rival. But he had previously plied Bismarck with offers of an alliance against Austria, whereof the main objects were the cession of the Duchies to Prussia, of Venetia to Italy, and of more than the left bank of the Rhine to France.*

* The draft of this treaty was divulged by Bismarck, at the same time as the famous Benedetti one, on the eve of the French war.

But Napoleon's perfidy did not stop here. It may seem incredible, but it is nevertheless true, that while the Imperial adventurer was tempting Bismarck with offers of an alliance against Austria, he was at the same time seeking to negotiate with that Power a secret treaty by which, in the event of a successful war against Prussia, Francis Joseph was to cede Venetia to the Italians, and be compensated, on the other hand, with Silesia! * It would surely be hard to find in all history a parallel to this record of duplicity on the part of Napoleon the Little. But at every stage in the game of his unscrupulous intrigues he was defeated and duped in the most masterly manner by "*l'homme de Biarritz*," as Bismarck had now come to be called.

Exulting in the failure of Napoleon's proposal of a Peace Congress, and eager for a pretext to commence hostilities which would put an end to an armed state of suspense that was beginning to be intolerable, Bismarck urged Italy to draw the sword. "You would do us excellent service by attacking first," he said to the Italian Ambassador at Berlin. The fact is that he was looking out for means of forcing the hand of the King, whom it cost him such a "frightful struggle" to persuade to fight, as he afterwards confessed. For a great many reasons his Majesty still shrank from the idea of war, and indeed the King himself formed as great an obstacle almost as the Chamber to the carrying out of his Premier's "blood and iron" policy. Bismarck, therefore, did all he could to induce Italy to precipitate events by taking the field first, but this she could not be brought to do. Nevertheless, fortune and the folly of Austria played into the hands

* Professor von Sybel, Keeper of the Prussian State Archives, in his pamphlet on "Napoleon III."

of Bismarck. Swift and bewildering was now the march of events. Within little more than a week from the failure of the Congress scheme Prussia had withdrawn from the Germanic Confederation and virtually declared war against Austria.

For Austria had at last announced that she would now submit the question of the Duchies to the Diet, and at the same time she summoned the estates of Holstein so as to learn their wishes as to the future fate of their province. Bismarck at once declared this to be high-handed interference with the condominate rights of Prussia in Holstein, and within a few days Manteuffel of the Iron Hand had marched his troops into the Duchy and pushed the Austrians, together with their Augustenburg Pretender bantling, crop and neck out of it altogether.

The Prussians were now the sole masters of Schleswig-Holstein. "*Beati possidentes!*" exclaimed Bismarck to himself. "Blessed are those who are in possession, for they shall not be cast out." He had expressed his readiness to submit the future of the Duchies to the Diet on his own conditions, which comprised the exclusion of Austria from the reformed Confederation, but to this Austria only replied by moving the Diet to mobilise all the Federal forces against the "wanton breaker" of the national peace. The motion was carried by nine to six votes, and Prussia at once notified her withdrawal from the Confederation, which was now a thing of the past. Bismarck had at last appealed to the God of Battles.

So far Bismarck had played the leading part in the great national drama—amid the hisses, howls, and execrations of the spectators in pit, boxes, and gallery; and now it was the turn of General von Moltke to make his entrance on the stage and astonish the world with some

of the finest feats of strategy ever performed. How his first care was to prevent the union of Prussia's foes in North and South Germany; how in less than two days he had disposed of the Hanoverian army at Langensalza and made the Elector of Hesse a State prisoner; how Manteuffel and his Vogel von Falckenstein on the Main made an end of all opposition from the Southern States with their ninety thousand men; and how Moltke sent three separate Prussian armies into Bohemia—under the "Red Prince," the Crown Prince, and Herwarth von Bittenfeld respectively—which converged, combined, and achieved a crushing, crowning victory (3rd July) over the united Austrian and Saxon armies near Bohemian Königgrätz—are all these things not recorded at length in the military page of the book of Germany's regeneration?

On the 30th June the septuagenarian King, with his mighty men of valour and of wisdom, had left Berlin for the seat of war in order to be present at the decisive encounter, Bismarck vowing to himself (as he afterwards owned) that he would never return alive, in the event of disaster, to be jeered at by the old women of Berlin, and pelted with their dishclouts and rotten apples. But indeed, before leaving the capital he had suddenly become the popular idol—he who, a few weeks previously, had been shot at, reviled, execrated, and accused of every political crime. The preliminary successes of the campaign had intoxicated with patriotic joy the heart of the whole Prussian nation, and on the morrow of Königgrätz (*Dem König geräth's*, "The King wins," the soldiers punningly called it), Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon had become the trinity of the people's worship. Bismarck had stood by his master's side all through the "murder grim and great" of the

greatest battle of modern times—greatest in point of numbers who took part in it (about 430,000 men), greatest in political results. From a multitude of anecdotes bearing on Bismarck's presence at this second *Völkerschlacht* I will only select one, and for the reason of its very symbolic meaning.

Towards the end of the battle, the King, calm and unmoved, was standing exposed to a frightful shell-fire, and his Minister-President began to grow anxious about his master's safety. He begged his Majesty to move on to a less exposed spot, asking whether he really thought that the shells which were whizzing past his head were swallows. But the King, intent on following the course of the battle, heeded not his Minister's exhortation. Then Bismarck, determined, as ever, to have his own way in the matter, had recourse to stratagem. Edging up towards the King, he gave his chestnut mare a good sly kick with the point of his riding-boot, at which the animal made a bound forward to a spot less directly in the line of fire. "The King looked round in astonishment," said Bismarck, "and I think he saw what I had done, but he said nothing." Quite so. It was by a similar method of compulsion that Bismarck had forced the King into the war which had now produced such magnificent results. If any man ever had greatness thrust upon him, it was certainly King William. He was made the founder of the new German Empire in spite of himself. "I have always managed," said Bismarck once to Lord Ampthill, "to talk over, if not to convince, my old master."

It was little wonder that, on the morrow of Königgrätz (more properly called Sadowa by the Austrians), the *Moniteur* announced to the French people that

"an important event had happened." Napoleon had been secretly counting on the defeat of Prussia (to whose assistance he would then have hurried if promised the ever-coveted left Rhine-bank for his pains), and now one decisive battle had made her mistress of Germany, nay, of the Continent. Never had the calculations of a gambler and a land-grabber been so cruelly upset. But his finger was not yet altogether out of the pie. For on the day after Königgrätz, King William received a telegram from Napoleon announcing that the Emperor of Austria had already ceded to him Venetia, as in trust for the Italians, whose army, by the way, had fared badly at the hands of the Austrians on the plains of Verona. At the same time, the intriguer of the Tuileries offered his services as a "magnanimous mediator," so as to prevent further bloodshed.

What he wanted above all things was a truce, so as to enable the Austrians, who had been victorious in Italy, to hurry up to the aid of their countrymen who had been so crushingly defeated in Bohemia. But Bismarck, seeing through this game, replied that, while willing to accept Napoleon's mediation, he could only consent to an armistice on getting from Austria the pledge of an acceptable peace.

M. Benedetti, the French Ambassador, had succeeded, after infinite pains, in persuading Francis Joseph to accept the suggestions of Napoleon as the basis of negotiation; but these suggestions did not include one single word about any territorial addition to Prussia as a due return for the risks she had run and the sacrifices she had made in the present war, and Bismarck frankly avowed that this compensation must take the form of

Saxony, Hanover, and Hesse-Cassel. These States had drawn the sword against Prussia, and for that they must now pay the just and natural penalty. England, Bismarck knew, would do just as little to prevent this as she had done on behalf of Denmark. Of Russia's benevolent neutrality he was equally sure; and as to France—here was Napoleon promising in secret not to oppose the annexations referred to, "on condition of your giving us Mayence and the Rhine frontier." "Well done, magnanimous and disinterested mediator!" thought Bismarck, who, mastering his rage at the very idea of such a demand, merely replied that the question of "compensation" to France could best be settled after the conclusion of peace with Austria, which was meanwhile the most pressing matter in hand.

And concluded these peace preliminaries presently were—26th July—at Nicolsburg (where Napoleon the Great had resided after Austerlitz), on Bismarck's own conditions—all save that relating to Saxony, which was let off with the payment of an indemnity and an undertaking to join the new Confederation of the North. King William himself had wished to annex part of Saxony and Bohemia, though from this purpose he was ultimately turned by Bismarck, who represented, with a wisdom which was to bear ample fruit in the future, that Austria was likely to forget and forgive everything but the loss of part of her territory proper. Hitherto it had been the fashion to regard King William as a Nestor, and his Premier as a Hotspur; but, in truth, it was just the reverse with their characters on this as on some other occasions. It was Bismarck who was the moderating influence throughout these peace negotiations, who had to address himself to

the "ungrateful task," as he wrote, "of pouring water into the foaming wine."*

From Austria, therefore, on his urgent advice, no greater material indemnity was exacted than a sum of forty million thalers, while the South German States which had sided with her were mulcted in proportionate sums. But, on the other hand, the war had resulted in aggrandisement enough for Prussia by the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau, and the Free City of Frankfort—territories which increased her geographical area by about a fourth of its previous extent, and added four and a half millions to her population.

Napoleon had certainly helped to obtain more merciful conditions for Saxony, as it was also mainly at his instance that "international and independent existence" had been secured for the Southern States, which he still hoped to play off against the new Confederation of the North. We have seen that Bismarck had staved off Napoleon's claims of "compensation" for his recognition of the new state of things until after the conclusion of peace with Austria; and he had only been back in Berlin two days with the draft of the Treaty of Prague (signed 23rd August) in his pocket, when he was again waited upon by M. Benedetti, who,

* In conversation (1868) with the celebrated jurist, Professor Bluntschli (as I gather from his "Memoirs"), Bismarck remarked that after the battle of Königgrätz he alone was for peace. The King was out of humour, and the Generals were enraged against the civilian element. Bismarck told the King that he would rather resign than take upon himself the responsibility for a continuance of the war, and begged his Majesty, if he went on with the campaign, to give him a commission in the active army in order to prove, at least, that he had no lack of personal courage.

on behalf of his Imperial master, now demanded a settlement. As Bismarck himself afterwards said in the Reichstag (May, 1871)—

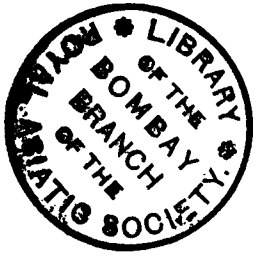
"It is well known that on the 6th of August, 1866, it came to this, that I was treated to a visit from the French Ambassador, who, in brief language, delivered the ultimatum—cede Mayence to France, or expect an immediate declaration of war. Of course I did not hesitate one second with my answer, and it was, 'Very well, then, let there be war!' With this reply he went back to Paris, where they thought over the matter and gave me to understand that his (Benedetti's) first instructions had been extorted from the Emperor during his illness."

Nothing more rapacious, insolent, and utterly unjustifiable than this demand of Napoleon for a slice of the German Fatherland had ever been heard of. In refusing it Bismarck knew, what Napoleon himself was as yet in total ignorance of, that the South German States—for which the French Emperor had stipulated "international and independent existence"—had separately agreed to military conventions with Prussia, placing their armies at the disposal of that Power in the event of a war with France! But, even without knowing this, Napoleon felt compelled to eat his own words, and postpone the war with which he had threatened Prussia.

Such, then, was the general result of the German war, a war of which the closing scene was formed by the triumphal entry (20th September) of King William and his victorious troops into Berlin. In this pageant Bismarck, who rode with his fellow-paladins, Moltke and Roon, in front of the King, was frantically cheered by the people who had but shortly before loaded him with the bitterest abuse; and Carlyle, the English historian of Frederick the Great, only voiced the sentiments of the whole Prussian people when he

wrote to a German friend on the date of the Treaty of Prague:—

"That Germany is to stand on her feet henceforth, and not be dismembered on the highway; but face all manner of Napoleons and hungry, sponging dogs, with clear steel in her hand, and an honest purpose in her heart—this seems to me the best news we or Europe have heard for the last forty years or more. May the Heavens prosper it! Many thanks also for Bismarck's photograph; he has a royal enough physiognomy, and I more and more believe him to be a highly considerable man; perhaps the nearest approach to a Cromwell that is well possible in these poor times."



# CHAPTER VII.

## NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION.

Results of Seven Weeks' War—The annexed Sovereignties—Hanover—Bismarck's "Unparalleled Magnanimity"—King George's Intrigues—A "Legion of Liars"—The "Reptile Fund"—North German Reichstag—The New Constitution—"Breathless and Faint"—Federal Chancellor—Napoleon's Aims—The Luxemburg Question—A French Satan—The Benedetti Treaty—The "High Road to Brussels"—The Military Treaties—Count Beust's opinion of them—Bismarck and Bennigsen—Luxemburg "a *casus belli*"—The London Conference—Not "lost to Germany"—Bismarck in Paris—A Shot at the Tsar—"*Voilà un homme!*"—The Gallic Cock—The Zoll-Parlament—Napoleon and North Schleswig—"*We* are Europe!"—Napoleon at Salzburg—Bismarck's Circular—Progress of Unity Movement—Bismarck quarrels with the Conservatives—Aims of the Liberals—Bismarck preserves the Peace of Europe—Roumania—Prince Charles of Hohenzollern—A "Pleasant Recollection"—An unpleasant Threat—The Cretan Insurrection—The Roman Question—Benedetti on Bismarck—The St. Gothard Tunnel.

THE Bohemian campaign resulted no less in the defeat of Austria than in the submission of the Prussian Chamber. The former had signed the Treaty of Prague, while the latter hastened to pass a Bill of indemnity on all the budgetless and other irregular acts of the Government committed during the "Conflict Time." The elections to the new Chamber had been held under the influence of the earlier victories in the Seven Weeks' War, with the result that the moderate

Liberals had now displaced the Progressists, or Radicals; and not only was the Indemnity Bill carried by a sweeping majority, but, as a special proof of its confidence, and a special admission of its own past errors of judgment, the Chamber also granted a credit of fifty million thalers to defend, if need be, what had now been won. Out of the million and a half thalers which were voted for distribution among the chief actors in the war, Bismarck was allotted the largest share—400,000 thalers (£60,000)—with part of which he hastened to purchase the fine estate of Varzin that was now to become his "Pomeranian Tusculum."

The Prussian Parliament busied itself with the incorporation of the annexed provinces into the Kingdom of Prussia; and, the better to facilitate the process of assimilation, these provinces were placed under an absolutist *régime* for about a year, when they were admitted into constitutional community with the rest of the monarchy. All the three deposed Sovereigns of Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau, had received handsome capital allowances out of their confiscated revenues—King George of Hanover getting about sixteen million thalers wherewith to support the dignity of his discrowned condition. It was, moreover, only by a threat to resign that Bismarck could persuade the Chamber to vote so generous a subsidy to the dethroned monarch, though on the tacit understanding "that the acceptance of our money would make him feel bound in honour to desist from active intrigues."

But it did nothing of the kind—quite the reverse. From his court of exile at Hietzing, near Vienna, blind old King George continued to intrigue in every possible way against his conquerors, maintaining,

among other things, a Hanoverian legion in France at the cost of 300,000 thalers a year, against the coming of Prussia's evil day, and subsidising a large number of newspapers to attack the Government of King William. The Hanoverian legion could not be got at, and was, indeed, perfectly innocuous as long as it remained in France. But the scribbling "legion of liars" who, with the pay of the exiled Guelph King in their pockets, distorted the motives and opposed the policy of Prussia, might be counteracted to some extent.

"We owed King George nothing," Bismarck had said, "but in the interest of peace we gave an example of magnanimity which, as far as I know, is without a parallel in the history of Europe." But this "unparalleled magnanimity" ceased to be a motive-power with King William and his Premier on their perceiving that the money which had been allowed King George was being employed by the latter as the sinews of war against themselves. Accordingly, the capital fund was at once sequestrated, and the interest thereon converted by Act of Parliament into a secret-service fund for foiling the anti-Prussian intrigues of the Hanoverians. This was the origin of the famous "Reptile Fund." "There is nothing of the spy in my whole nature," said Bismarck, "but I think we shall deserve your thanks by devoting ourselves to the pursuit of wicked *reptiles* into their very holes, in order to watch what they are about." But the term "reptile-print" continued to be applied to the semi-official and subsidised Press of Prussia long after the tactics of the Hanoverians had ceased to be the main object of its attention.

All these things had been said and done in the

Prussian Chambers. But public attention was now centred in a very much more important legislature—the Reichstag, or Parliament, of the North German Confederation, which, returned by universal suffrage, had met at Berlin in February, 1867. The first stage of the national unity had at last been reached. By the Bohemian campaign, Prussia had not only aggrandised herself and extruded Austria from the family circle of German peoples; she had also grouped around her in cohesive Federal union all the German States—twenty-two in number—north of the Main, and was now looking hopefully forward to the day when the Southern States, who had meanwhile been secured "independent and international existence" by the Peace of Prague, would come of their own accord and knock for admittance into the national fold.

In the meantime, however, there was enough to do in setting this fold in order. The first Reichstag was of the constituent kind, and had been convoked to discuss and approve the new Constitution—a North German Government, with Federal Home Rule accorded to the separate States. Fortunately for the framers of this Constitution, Bismarck now enjoyed the support of the party to which Königgrätz had given birth, that of the National Liberals, who wielded the balance of power in the Federal Parliament. These patriotic men, with the Hanoverian Herr von Bennigsen at their head, put national unity before all their other aims; while the Progressists were for freedom first and unity afterwards. With the aid of the former and the Conservatives, Bismarck was able to carry through the Constitution in a form acceptable to the Federal Sovereigns, though only after an amount of wrangling which made him feel, he said, like Hotspur when,

"breathless and faint" after battle, he was "pestered with a popinjay" of a too-fastidious lord.

Within less than two months the constituent Assembly had done its work, and Germany at last started on the path of her national existence. For this she had mainly to thank Bismarck, who was now appointed Bundeskanzler, or Federal Chancellor, the sole responsible Minister under the Constitution. Of this Constitution the King of Prussia, as *ex-officio* President of the Federal Council, was made the executive chief; and this Council, representing the allied Sovereigns, formed with the Reichstag, or House of Deputies, the quasi-bicameral legislature of the North German Confederation.

But the setting of the national house in order was not by any means the only thing which had engaged the attention of the first Reichstag. For, while deep in its constitutional debates, its attention was suddenly directed to a very serious danger, which threatened the new national edifice from without; and the author of this danger was none other than Louis Napoleon. The war of 1866 had solved the German question, but it had created a European one. It had put an end to the Austro-Prussian dualism in Germany, but it had also given birth to an acute rivalry, or at least antagonism, between Germany and France. Louis Napoleon looked upon the union of the Fatherland as a thing that might give the death-blow to the long-standing predominance of France, and it had been his persistent aim to frustrate this consummation by sleight or might.

We have seen how he had stipulated for a separate existence for the Southern States, from selfish motives entirely, and how he had repeatedly plied Bismarck

with unsuccessful offers for the left bank of the Rhine. If Germany was to be made one, he would know the reason why. He had demanded compensation for the creation of the North German Confederation, but got none whatever. For why in Heaven's name should he? Yet he returned to the charge again and again, only to be repulsed. In spite of his opposition and his intrigues, he began to perceive that the union of North and South was only a question of time, and for his recognition of this result the recompense would have to be larger still. It is well to remember these things for the reason that the real cause of the great war of 1870 must be sought for, not so much in the Spanish Crown affair, as in the history of all the interval between the Peace of Prague and the promenade incident of Ems.

As a matter of positive fact, the war with France was the consequence of the repeated rebuffs which Louis Napoleon had experienced during this period at the hands of Bismarck. The Chancellor once before said that if, as alleged by his detractors, he had sold himself to a Devil, it was to a Teutonic and not a Gallic one; but this was certainly not for want of tempting enough on the part of the French Satan. And the greatest temptation of all was when M. Benedetti, the nimble satellite of this Satan, returned to Berlin—soon after his second rebuff at the end of the Bohemian campaign—with a still more impudent and incredible proposal.

This was embodied in the draft of a treaty, in the handwriting of the French Ambassador, which was to give France possession of Luxemburg for recognising the results of the last war, and of Belgium for "raising no opposition" to the complete union of North and South Germany! The draft document itself, of which

Bismarck was careful at the time to obtain possession, was published to a startled and incredulous Europe on the eve of the French war. "He (Bismarck) was the author, though I was the writer," sorrowfully pleaded M. Benedetti in extenuation of the public crime which he had proposed to commit; but if Bismarck played any part in the concoction of the crime, it was certainly not more than that of an *agent provocateur*.

Napoleon had been duped in the most outrageous manner, but, though thus outwitted at his own game, he was by no means discouraged. He had set his heart on Luxemburg "as the high road to Brussels," and Luxemburg he would have. This Grand Duchy—wholly German in race and speech—was subject to the King of Holland in the same way as the Elbe Duchies had been to the King of Denmark; and, as alien rulers of these German lands, both Sovereigns had been represented in the Diet at Frankfort. But when the old Germanic Confederation was supplanted by the new one, the King of Holland elected not to belong to it as for Luxemburg. He was quite within his rights in doing this. But, on the other hand, he demanded that, as he himself, *quâ* Grand Duke of Luxemburg, had retired from the new Confederation, so also the garrison which Prussia had hitherto been entitled to keep within his fortress should similarly be withdrawn.

Now, to no one did this demand appear more just or reasonable than to the monarch who coveted Luxemburg as "the high road to Brussels." But, instead of quarrelling with Bismarck over the matter, Napoleon preferred addressing himself directly to the King of Holland, with the view of inducing him to cede his German dominion to France outright and be done with it—sell it for a sum of money and a guarantee of the

integrity of his Dutch territory against, for example, the aggression of Germany. For was Luxemburg, with its Prussian garrison, not a standing menace to the peace and safety of inoffensive France?

Bismarck was well aware of what was going on at the Hague, and on the very day when the Dutch King, in reply to Napoleon's offer, remarked "Well, I will not say no," the Military Treaties between Prussia and the South German States were published at Berlin. Here, indeed, was a dramatic, almost a melodramatic, situation. Napoleon had been flattering himself all this while that he had driven an effective riving wedge into the German national oak by securing "independent international existence" for the Southern States, and now, lo and behold! there were these States just as dependent as they possibly could be on Prussia. Nay, the very treaties by which these States bound themselves to place their armies at the disposal of Prussia in the event of a war—say, with France—had been signed on *the day before* the Peace of Prague, which secured separate Federal existence to the South. Fairness compels me to quote what was said of this unparalleled transaction by Count Beust ("Memoirs"):—

"Government circles in Vienna had some suspicion, but no certainty, as to the South German Military Treaties, and to the general public they came as a complete surprise. To call things by their true names, these treaties were a masterpiece of treachery. It has frequently happened in history that treaties were not kept, but that a treaty should be broken in anticipation was a novelty reserved for the genius of Prince Bismarck. To sign treaties with the South German States, reducing them to a permanent condition of dependence on Prussia, and then to conclude a few days later a treaty with Austria (Peace of Prague) stipulating for these States an independent international existence—this was indeed the *ne plus ultra* of Macchiavellism."

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In spite of the Military Treaties which had thus been so timeously sprung upon Napoleon, he continued his negotiations with the Dutch for the cession of Luxemburg—the King of Prussia being now privy to the transaction, and at last, after much haggling by the French, and hesitancy on the part of the Dutch, a treaty for the cession of the Grand Duchy was on the very eve of being signed. But, *hey, presto!* just at this crucial moment Bismarck was ready with another skilful device which had the effect of upsetting the whole bargain and making the King of Holland shrink from the possible consequences of his meditated act.

All Germany had been ringing with rumours of the proposed cession, and the nation was simply wild with rage at the very thought. What was more, this nation —hitherto mute—had now got a mouthpiece in the shape of its Reichstag, and what was the use of a Parliament, thought Bismarck, if its speech could not be made to prove subservient upon occasion to his policy? If Napoleon would not hearken unto him, let him at least listen to the warning voice of the German people. "To dislodge Prussia from a fortress which passes for a bulwark of Germany," replied Count Beust when sounded by Napoleon as to the feeling of Austria, "is to enable M. de Bismarck to appeal to the passions of his countrymen, and rally all disaffected elements round his standard." He therefore got Herr von Bennigsen to put a question to the Government on the subject of all these ugly rumours, in order that his warning to the French Emperor and the Dutch King might take the unofficial form of a reply to the interpellation of a German deputy. Bennigsen's speech was one of the finest efforts of patriotic eloquence to which any German Parliament had ever listened.

"For a certain Power contiguous to our own frontiers," he said, "the temptation to interfere before our new institutions have been consolidated by time and practice is evidently too great. We want peace. But if France does not hesitate to insult us, the earlier we say that we are all for war the better. It would be sullying our honour were we to act otherwise; it would be an indelible stain on the national escutcheon were we to submit to arrogance and cupidity combined. We must call upon Count Bismarck to prove that energy is the best policy under certain circumstances. We must expect that the King, whose promise that 'not a single village should be separated from Germany' found a responsive echo in our hearts, will call the nation to arms, if the necessity arises. Let France pause and consider her course before she acts. Germany seeks no war; but if France will not allow us to become a united country, we are ready to give her the most indubitable proof that the time of our domestic division is past, and that her attempts will be henceforth resisted by the whole nation."

It is needless to say that this splendid appeal was greeted with perfect thunders of applause from all parts of the House. "The Allied Governments," said Bismarck in reply, "hoped and trusted that no foreign Power would seek to prejudice the indubitable rights of German States and German races." At the same time he sent a notification to the Hague that his Government would be forced to regard the cession of Luxemburg to France as a *casus belli*. For the present, therefore, here was an end of the matter. Bent as he was on compensating himself for the successes of Prussia, Napoleon now saw that Bismarck was equally resolved that Germany should not pay France for her unity, as Italy had been forced to do, with her own flesh and blood. The Emperor's rapacious aims had again been baulked, and it only now remained for him to seek some fair-seeming means of retreat from the ignominious predicament in which he found himself. He was not yet prepared to fight, being hampered, among

other things, by his Mexican enterprise, and yet he must salve his wounded honour somehow.

A Conference of the Powers would help him to do this. This Conference ultimately met in London (May, 1867), and in four days concluded its business. At first Napoleon had confined himself to demanding the evacuation of Luxemburg by its Prussian garrison, to which Bismarck had replied (15th April) that, "as things at present stood, Prussia could not consent to the separation of Luxemburg from Germany, under any form whatever, or to the evacuation of its stronghold." But he had come to think better of the matter. For there were conflicting currents in Berlin, and he feared, all things considered, that it was not yet time for the war-party, headed by Moltke, to have its way. Above all things, the attitude of Austria in the event of a struggle with France was still doubtful. Count Beust, Francis Joseph's new Chancellor, had denounced the Military Treaties between North and South as a flagrant breach of the Peace of Prague. He had tried, though vainly, to effect an alliance between Austria, France, and Italy; and, more than all, he had rejected Bismarck's offer of alliance conveyed to him by Count Tauffkirchen during the acutest stage of the Luxemburg question.

All these considerations made Bismarck assume a less inflexible attitude on the question to be submitted to the London Conference, and, to be brief, let me summarise the results of that Conference in the words with which Bismarck himself replied to the taunt of the Socialist, Herr Bebel, that Luxemburg had been "lost to Germany."

"We resigned the right to garrison Luxemburg, believing that right to have been rendered doubtful by the dissolution of the old German Confederacy; but, in so doing, we did not lose the Grand

Duchy of Luxemburg to Germany. It remains a neutral and independent State, and has not been appropriated by any of our neighbours. This is the true state of affairs. In my opinion we ought to be grateful to his Majesty that he withstood the temptation to lead his armies to new victories, seeing the cause of war would have been a mere right of garrison contested by our neighbours, and no longer maintainable by ourselves. A Sovereign in the habit of himself leading his army to the field, who has witnessed the fall of so many of his warriors, and seen their eyes glazed in death, does not lightly resolve upon war. Moreover, there is the European guarantee for Luxemburg, which fully makes up to us for the evacuation of the works."

The Conference of London was followed by a visit of King William and his Chancellor to Paris (June) on the invitation of Napoleon, who had organised for this year (1867) a great Industrial Exhibition to show the world that, above all things, he was a man of peace, *n'est ce pas?* "We hope," M. Granier de Cassagnac had written, "that the Prussian Minister will not carry his audacity so far as to afflict us with his presence and to brave our righteous resentment." "Paris," wrote the *Moniteur* on the other hand, "will lose sight of the political adversary, and only view in M. de Bismarck the guest of France." At first the Chancellor had shown something like disinclination to the proposed trip, but a word from the King made him at once change his mind. "The King," he said to M. Benedetti, "thinks I am afraid, and that ever since my life was attempted I have been haunted by the fear of assassins."

As it turned out, the Paris meeting was not unmarked by an attempt at assassination, though this was directed neither against Bismarck nor his Royal master, but against Alexander II. of Russia, who had emancipated the serfs, but continued to keep the Poles in an iron state of subjection. Crowds of exile Poles were

then living in Paris, and one of these, Berezovski, endeavoured to shoot the Tsar while returning from a grand review in the Bois de Boulogne; and who can tell to what extent Berezovski's bullet may not have influenced the Emperor Alexander's attitude to the war of 1870?

But amid all this assemblage of Sovereigns and their suites, Bismarck was the most observed of all observers. Had not M. Thiers, speaking a month or two before in the Corps Legislatif, said: "Of M. de Bismarck it must be said what Bossuet said of Cromwell, that 'a man has at last come to light.'" Or, quoting what the First Napoleon remarked of Goethe, he might have said: "*Voilà un homme.*" "To me," said an English correspondent, "the most interesting feature in this unparalleled show (a review of 55,000 troops at Longchamps) was the astute Russian statesman (Gortchakoff) and his equally astute German rival (Bismarck) riding side by side in such a spot and in such a company." Moltke, too, was there, taking "quiet strategic walks" in the vicinity of Paris. As for Bismarck himself, he cherished no illusions whatever about all this confraternal show of feasting and embracing. The destinies of the two nations, he knew, were not to be settled by mock millenialism of this kind. He afterwards related that General Vaillant, Chief of the French General Staff, on whom he called one day, said to him, "I admire and love Prussia, and I admire and love you, but we shall have to cross bayonets, for all that." The Chancellor, looking at him with surprise, asked why. The answer was: "We are both of us cocks, and cannot allow others to crow better than ourselves."

Bismarck had not been long back in Berlin before the Gallic cock began to crow louder and more menac-

ingly than ever. What had stirred its cock-a-lorum choler this time was the discovery, the more than shameful discovery, that, just before stepping into the train that was to take him to Paris, Bismarck had come to an agreement with the Southern States for the creation of a common Parliament dealing with the customs and commercial policy of the whole Fatherland. Was that not enough to make the whole French nation flame up with righteous indignation at such unspeakable perfidy? Where was the faithlessness of this unutterable man Bismarck to find its limits? Had he not, at the instance of Napoleon, solemnly undertaken, with pen and ink upon a sealed parchment, to respect the "separate and independent existence" of the Southern States; and not only had he already signed secret military treaties with these States, but here he was again enticing them within the national fold of a *Zoll-Parlament*, between which and a *Voll-Parlament* the difference was but one of degree. Was this not enough to wear out the patience of a long-suffering and insulted France? What right had Germany to become wholly united without the express consent of its omnipotent and imperious neighbour?

To all this Bismarck could only reply that he had, indeed, assented to the idea of the "internationally independent existence" of the Southern States, but only on condition, *bien entendu*, of their forming themselves into a Confederation like that of the North—a condition which had not yet been fulfilled, to his infinite regret. For he was certain that, if the States of the South had only called into existence a common Parliament like that of the North, "the two Assemblies could not have been longer kept apart than the waters of the Red Sea after the passage of the Israelites."

But, apart from the provision relating to the Southern States, the Treaty of Prague also contained another clause bearing the intolerable stamp of French interference. This was the stipulation that "if, by free vote, the people of North Schleswig, express a wish to be ceded to Denmark, they shall be ceded to Denmark accordingly." Was not Napoleon the "champion of oppressed nationalities," and could he, therefore, stand idly by and leave these poor North Schleswig folk to their bitter fate? *Jamais!* And accordingly the Danes were now egged on by the Emperor to claim the exercise of the *plébiscite* contemplated by the Peace of Prague. They were told from Berlin that their request could only be complied with on their giving certain guarantees—of a just and reasonable kind. These guarantees they refused to give, and their refusal was endorsed by Napoleon, who declared to Bismarck that his conditions would only prove the seeds of eternal contention with Denmark. Whereupon Bismarck hastened to answer that, as regarded the execution of the Peace of Prague, Prussia had only to reckon with her co-signatory, Austria, and that he could not admit the claims of any other Power to have a say in the matter—an astonishing rebuff to the Paris journal, *La France*, which wrote: "*We* are Europe."

Having thus experienced another very severe rebuff at the hands of Bismarck in the North, Napoleon now set himself to fish once more in the troubled waters of the South. So, at least, thought the Germans when they beheld the "magnanimous mediator" travelling through South Germany with his consort to meet their Austrian Majesties at Salzburg. *Que diable allait il faire dans cette galère?* asked all patriotic Germans of themselves;

and the Press teemed with indignant protest against this apparent interference in the internal affairs of the nation. At one station—Augsburg—the French Emperor was hooted and hissed. It boded no good for Germany (so it was thought), this secret confabulation between the Sovereign who had been expelled her fold, and the "man of destiny" who had taken to prowling round this fold like a midnight wolf.

Napoleon, of course, was ready as ever with his answer. He had merely gone to Salzburg—what more natural or human?—to condole with the Austrian Emperor on the assassination of his brother, Maximilian, who had fallen a victim to that inveterate French habit of meddling with the affairs of others which had now again excited the suspicion of the Germans. An official French circular insisted on the purely private nature of the Salzburg meeting, and Bismarck *professed* to be satisfied with the explanations thus given,

"all the more, inasmuch as the reception given to the first disquieting news (about the Salzburg interview) has again demonstrated the fact that German national sentiment cannot endure the idea of the nation's affairs being placed under the tutelage of foreign intruders, or conducted so as to suit other interests than our own."

The Salzburg meeting had one great result. It gave a new stimulus to the movement for union between North and South, which it was the aim of Napoleon to prevent; and even the Grand Duke of Baden, son-in-law of the King of Prussia, now begged for admittance into the Confederation of the North. But, to his surprise, his offer was for the present declined, Bismarck deeming that it would be injudicious to receive the Grand Duke into the fold until his fellow-Sovereigns south of the Main were as far advanced with their national ideas as he was. To separate Baden from its loose connection

with Bavaria, Würtemberg, and Hesse, could only, he thought, act upon these three States "like the skimming of the cream from a basin of milk which tended to make the rest become sour."

There was still some very serious difference of opinion, and much dangerous wrangling in the South as to its proper policy towards the North; but at length a more hopeful stage in the national development was reached when the Customs-Parliament for *all* Germany, the "*ganzes Deutschland*" of the lyric poet, met at Berlin in the spring of 1868. The session, which only lasted about a month, was mainly devoted to the question of a commercial treaty with Austria; but this did not prevent the occasional expression of higher sentiments than those which were evoked by the debates about the tariff on rags and raw-iron. At a grand fraternal banquet which wound up the short session, Prince Hohenlohe, the Bavarian Premier, who had been returned as a deputy to the Customs-Parliament, proposed, amid tremendous cheering, "The Unity of Germany." "The short time we have been together," said Bismarck, "has vanished like a spring day; may it bear fruit like the blossoms of spring." "We have seen," exclaimed a Bavarian, "that, as every time has its man, so the second half of this century has its man for Germany; and whatever may be the opinion of others, I for my part behold this man in Count Bismarck."

To hasten his unifying work, Bismarck knew, was to incur the risk of spoiling it; and now that the greater part of it had already been done, there was no particular hurry, he thought, with the remainder. By a dead-lift effort the stone had already been set rolling—*that* was the main thing, and nothing could now im-

pede its passage to the foot of the hill. Bismarck did not really wish the South to join the North until the former was prepared to do so of its own accord—with its whole heart and mind—believing that, to force its will would only introduce explosive elements into the new Confederation, which, in itself, was not yet over-free from the operation of centrifugal forces. In particular, he had fallen out with the Conservatives in the Prussian Chamber, who objected strongly to his "unparalleled magnanimity" towards the King of Hanover, as well as to his general policy of decentralisation. He was growing much too German for them, and ceasing to be Prussian. The "narrower patriotism"* which had been his watchword all through the period of the Revolution, and of the Constitutional struggles in Prussia, was now gradually giving way before the force of the national idea.

But while thus he had incurred the obloquy of his old friends, the Conservatives, in the Prussian Chamber, Bismarck equally began to be hampered by his new supporters, the National Liberals, in the Reichstag. One reason, in the opinion of this party, why the Southerners still held out against union with their countrymen north of the Main, was that the new Federal institutions were not altogether to their freedom-loving taste; but, if these institutions could be liberalised, might not the South be induced to come and knock at the door of the North? This was the calculation of the Liberals in the Reichstag when they began a series of attempts to cobble at the Constitution which they had but lately approved. They wanted payment of mem-

* The Germans use the expression "*engeres Vaterland*," "narrower Fatherland," to describe the particular State in which they happen to be born.

bers, greater freedom of speech, more financial power, abolition of capital punishment, a responsible Ministry (not of the "one-man" kind), and various other innovations.

But even though most of these demands had been supported by a majority in the Reichstag, they were rejected by the Federal Council. Instead of inducing the South to join the North, his compliance with Liberal demands, argued Bismarck, would only tend to "deepen the Main." The Unionists were not to suppose that by "holding a lantern under a tree they could help to ripen its fruit," or that, by "advancing the hands of the clock, they could thus accelerate the march of time." Even in the spring of 1870, when the Liberals tabled a motion for the admission of Baden into the Confederacy, Bismarck again declared that events were not yet ripe for the consummation of the nation's hopes. He remained true to his determination not to force the will of the South; and this determination was partly due to his care not to furnish France, or any other jealous Power, with a pretext for meddling with the affairs of Germany.

Ever since the settlement of the Luxemburg dispute this had been his greatest care; but it was a care of which the nation at large knew little, and that little was very vague. It was fortunate for Germany that her foreign policy, at least, was in the hands of a Minister wholly independent of shifting popular favour, who could thus conduct it with a unity and a continuity unknown to democratic Governments like that of England. Twice already, in anticipation of his subsequent function as "honest broker," he had saved the peace of Europe from being broken. The first of these services related to Roumania, of which Prince Charles of Hohenzollern had

accepted the Crown at his private instigation, Bismarck saying that, even if the adventure failed, it would form for the rest of the Prince's life a "*schöne Erinnerung*," or "pleasant reminiscence."

But the Prince had not been long upon the throne of Roumania when he was suspected of an ambition to do for the Roumanian-speaking races what his patron, Bismarck, was in course of achieving for the German people. This rash, unifying movement aroused the opposition of Turkey on one side, and of Austria on the other, while Bismarck was pointed to by the French as the author of all the evil, and Prince Charles as his willing tool. In doing this, their object was to render Austria all the readier to listen to the overtures of Napoleon for an anti-Prussian alliance. But Bismarck suddenly destroyed all this French fabric of falsehood and intrigue by a single stroke of his pen. Once, when arguing with Prince Frederick of Augustenburg about the latter's claim to the Elbe Duchies, Bismarck had cautioned him to be moderate in his demands, seeing that "Prussia would not hesitate to wring the neck of the chicken which she herself had hatched." And now to Prince Charles of Roumania he hesitated not to employ language of equal directness and force. In November, 1868, he instructed Count Keiserling, the Prussian agent at Bucharest, to demand from the Prince the immediate dismissal of his Bratiano Ministry, which had been guilty of all the aggressive acts complained of by Austria, or, failing compliance with this request, to ask for his passport. Prince Charles felt as if thunderstruck, yet he saw that he had no choice but to sacrifice the Minister who had first invited him to go to Bucharest to the will of the offended statesman who had urged him to accept that invitation.

As Bismarck had thus saved the peace of Europe by striking the Roumanian question off the list of public business for the time being, so he also was the first to propose a Conference for the pacific settlement of the quarrel about Crete between Greece and Turkey (January, 1869). On the other hand, however, he declined the invitation of Napoleon to a Conference on the Roman question, as Prussia, he said, "was a Power which could only act after a clear survey of the political chessboard." Sincerely sympathising as he did with the national movement in Italy, he nevertheless thought it would be unwise to furnish France with a more plausible pretext for a quarrel with Germany than the completion of the latter's unity.

It certainly could not have been the object of Prussia to help in lessening the embarrassments of a Power which was only waiting for an opportunity of applying the touch of war to the as yet unfinished edifice of German unity. For Bismarck shared the conviction of his countrymen that a conflict between the two nations was only a question of time. In France this belief was equally firm; but there it was expected that aggression would come from Germany. M. Benedetti, on the other hand, who had better means of judging than any of his countrymen, was "profoundly convinced" that it was not Bismarck's object to attack France. "On the contrary, his chief pre-occupation, if I mistake not, is to avoid a conflict with us; but he feels that the policy he is pursuing in Germany may bring about one, and all his calculations are subordinated to this grave eventuality." And what had even Napoleon himself said to Lord Clarendon, on returning to Paris from Biarritz in October, 1868?

"I can only be responsible for peace as long as Bismarck respects the present state of things, but whenever he draws the States of South Germany into the Confederation of the North, then our cannons will go off of their own accord."*

They were, indeed, very nearly going off when the Reichstag voted a sum of ten million francs towards the cost of boring the St. Gothard tunnel—an act of friendship towards Italy which the French at once twisted into a deliberate act of hostility towards themselves. "Insulted again by M. de Bismarck!" howled out the bellicose Chauvinists of the Boulevards in the most threatening manner. But presently these Chauvinists were to be furnished with a much more welcome pretext for the infuriated use of their lungs.

* Quoted by Herr von Sybel from some "unpublished Memoirs."

# CHAPTER VIII.

## WAR WITH FRANCE.

Peace assured—True causes of the War—Prince Leopold and the Spanish Crown—M. Benedetti at Ems—The Ambassador's Rebuff—The King's Telegram to Bismarck—Bismarck, Roon, and Moltke—From Chamade to Fanfare—Bismarck's share in the War—"Krieg, mobil!"—Diplomatic Excursions and Alarums—Germany already United—Bismarck's Habits in the Field—Gravelotte—Bismarck's two Soldier-Sons—Sedan—Meeting with Napoleon—A Royal Toast—Jules Favre asks for an Armistice—"Bursts of Feeling"—Bismarck cautions Europe and warns Paris—Versailles—Search for a Government—Bismarck and Bazaine—A "Bedlam of Monkeys"—M. Thiers treats with Bismarck for a Truce—The Black Sea Clause—Gortchakoff before his Time—Odo Russell and his empty Threats—"Silly Fellows!"—The London Conference—Scene in Versailles Prefecture—North and South—The Crown Prince's Impatience and Impolicy—His share in the Creation of the Reich—Form and Fact—German People and German Princes—Proclamation of the Empire—Bismarck whistles the "Halali"—Favre again—Gambetta—M. Thiers—The Bordeaux Assembly—Peace Negotiations—Preliminary Treaty—Bismarck enters Paris—Home again.

KING WILLIAM had gone to Ems to take the waters, and his mood there was all the more blithe as M. Ollivier, chief of the French Cabinet, had publicly declared (30th June, 1870) "that at no time was the peace of Europe so assured as at present." A similar statement had been made in the English Parliament. But this was only the delusive lull before the storm—the most frightful war-storm which had ever raged in

Europe. Rising suddenly above the Pyrenees, the war-cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, darkened and spread with appalling swiftness, and presently broke in a deluge of blood on the banks of the Rhine.

Attentive readers of the last two chapters can have no doubt whatever as to the real causes of this great and memorable war, which was simply a war of jealousy, revengefulness, and vainglorious rapacity on the part of the French—jealousy of the growing power of Germany, revengefulness for the repeated rebuffs which Napoleon had experienced at the hands of Bismarck, and his robber-like desire to possess the left bank of the Rhine. These were, beyond all doubt and cavil, the true causes of the mighty life-and-death conflict into which France and Germany were now plunged, though its proximate cause, its *causa causans*, was the Hohenzollern Prince Leopold's acceptance of the Spanish Crown.

Herr von Sybel places it beyond all doubt that the idea of the Hohenzollern candidature did not originate in Berlin but in Madrid, and that Prince Leopold, acting in consonance with what he knew to be the views of his Royal relative of Prussia, refused the Spanish Crown thrice before at last accepting it when offered him for the fourth time, and then, too, without the cognizance and approval of the Protestant head of his House. But it is not necessary to dwell on the question of who was really responsible for the "candidature" of Prince Leopold. Suffice to say that, in deference to the sensitiveness of the French—who beheld in this "candidature" a decided menace to the interests of their country, and began to raise what can only be described as a most infernal hullaballoo about the matter—Prince Leopold's acceptance of the Spanish Crown was finally withdrawn

at the instance of the King of Prussia, who told the French Ambassador that he now considered the matter to be settled. But this would not, and did not, content the war-Furies at Paris, who instructed M. Benedetti at Ems to demand from King William not only public approval of the present, but also a binding guarantee for the future—that his Majesty would never again allow his princely kinsman to stand for the Crown of Spain. To such an insulting request the self-respecting King could return but one answer, and refuse to re-admit to his presence the Ambassador who had begged for another audience with the view of reiterating in private the demands which he had already urged in vain upon the public promenade of Ems.

The King hastened to telegraph a severely simple and accurate account of this personal incident to Bismarck, who had suddenly been summoned to Ems from Varzin, but had interrupted his journey at Berlin on learning there that Prince Leopold's acceptance of the Spanish Crown had been withdrawn, and on consequently concluding that there was no longer any pressing need for his presence at Ems. But the receipt of the King's telegram now put a wholly different complexion on the affair—the more so as this telegram had ended with the remark that his Majesty left it to Bismarck to decide whether or not a statement of the case should be at once communicated to the foreign agents of Prussia as well as to the Press. Moltke and Roon chanced to be dining with the Chancellor when the King's telegram was handed to him; and he felt a thrill of secret satisfaction at the unexpected turn which things had taken, at the way the French had thus put themselves in his power.

From the very first Bismarck had perceived, quicker

than the two Generals, the decisive importance of the Royal command. The publication would double the significance of the rebuff, while its form would do so tenfold. It was now for the French to consider whether they would swallow the bitter pill, or make good their threats. Bismarck at once prepared a statement for the Press, and then read out the King's telegram in its modified form to his two friends. Roon said, "That's better." Moltke added, "At first it sounded like a chamade, and now it is a fanfare." Bismarck remarked, "If the telegram is delivered to the Ambassadors at eleven o'clock it can also be made known at Paris by midnight, and then the French will see how false is the assertion of their newspapers that the Prussians are suing for mercy. But suppose they take the thing amiss and draw the sword, how stands it then with our chances of victory?" "I believe," replied Moltke, "that we shall prove superior to them, always, of course, with the reservation that no one can ever foresee the issue of a great pitched battle." After going into details, he concluded: "If I could only lead our army in this war, then afterwards the Devil would be quite welcome to this skeleton of mine" (slapping his breast as he spoke).

Telegraphed at once to Paris, Bismarck's statement had the effect of inflaming the French to such a pitch of fury as to destroy all further hope in peace. Be it noted, that the French even now did not accuse King William of having insulted their Ambassador. What they complained of was that Bismarck had thus boasted to all Europe that France had been affronted in the person of M. Benedetti. It was the boast more than the rebuff which made them yell for blood. And yet Bismarck's "boast" was nothing but a brief and bare statement of what had actually occurred, and which it

behoved the German people at such a momentous crisis of their fortunes to know.

A comparison of the King's telegram with Bismarck's *communiqué* to the Press shows conclusively that the Chancellor did not omit, add, or alter one single fact, and yet, as Moltke said, he had changed its tone from that of a bugle-note for a parley to that of a defiant flourish of trumpets. Before receiving the King's telegram Bismarck had been mortally afraid that his Majesty would yield to Benedetti's demands, and in that case he was resolved to resign. There had been no intrigue on his part before, but now he had seen clearly that the French were bent on war on one pretext or other—and, if so, the sooner the better for Germany. By frantic efforts the French had got the avalanche of war pushed and levered to the brink of the abyss, and Bismarck, in order to gain time by precipitating the inevitable, had given the avalanche the final fillip, the briskest little finger-touch, which sent it over. This is really what it came to. This was Bismarck's share in bringing about the war.*

King William had returned to Berlin on the 15th July, and on the 19th the French declaration of war was delivered in Berlin, being, as Bismarck explained to the Reichstag—

* In his "Rejoinder" to certain statements in the Crown Prince's "Diary" (published by Dr. Geffcken), Bismarck said:—"At the very beginning of the Diary it is said that on the 13th July, 1870, I looked upon peace as secured, and therefore wanted to return to Varzin. As a matter of fact—which can be proved by documentary evidence—H.R.H. knew at the time that I regarded war as necessary, and was resolved to go to Varzin only after retiring from office if war were avoided. H.R.H. was at one with me about this, as appears from the alleged entry on the 15th July, where it is said that the Crown Prince completely agreed with me that peace and concession were already impossible."

"the first and only communication we have received from the French Government on the subject which has engrossed the attention of the world for the last fortnight. . . . Rarely has any important event occurred in European history where the documents have been of so scanty a description. . . . The French Ambassador never attempted to enter on official negotiations with his Majesty's Government on the subject. He merely introduced the question in personal and private conversation with his Majesty at Ems."

The Reichstag hastened to vote a credit of 120 million thalers, and the whole nation—South as well as North—went almost wild with patriotic joy at the thought that the day of reckoning with their meddling and malevolent neighbours across the Rhine had come at last. "My impression," wrote Bismarck in a circular despatch, "is that the conviction, at length dawning on the Emperor, that no extension of the French boundaries would be attainable with our assistance, has led him to the resolution of attempting it despite our opposition." The better to prove this, Bismarck now divulged to an equally astonished and indignant Europe the various draft-treaties by which M. Benedetti had endeavoured from time to time during the last four years to gain him over to the aggressive and rapacious purposes of his Imperial master. He had resisted these overtures, and this was the result. Public opinion throughout the civilised world was almost unanimous in laying the wanton blood-guiltiness of the war at the door of France. The declaration of war had at last bridged the Main. Germany was already one and indivisible. Bismarck's unifying work had practically been completed. It only remained for him to place the coping-stone upon the national edifice.

The German Foreign Office had been mobilised as well as the German Army, and Bismarck took the field

to do the diplomatic work of the campaign with the aid of a staff of secretaries, cipherers, and semi-official Press-hacks. Chief of the latter was Dr. Moritz Busch, who, in his book ("*Bismarck und seine Leute*") recording the doings and table-talk of the Chancellor during the campaign, drew the following picture of his master's ways:

"During the journey we generally drove close behind the King's carriage. We started about ten in the morning, and usually accomplished nearly forty English miles a day. On arriving at our quarters for the night we at once established a Bureau, in which work was seldom wanting, especially when the field-telegraph reached us; by its means the Chancellor again became—what, indeed, he always was at this time, with brief interruptions—the centre of the civilised world of Europe. Even where we only halted for one night, restlessly active himself, he kept all about him in constant employment till quite late. Orderlies came and went, couriers arrived with letters and telegrams, and were immediately sent off again. According to the directions of the Chief, the Councillors prepared notes and orders; the clerks copied and registered, ciphered and deciphered. Material streamed in from all points of the compass in the shape of reports, questions, articles in the newspapers, and such-like, most of which required immediate attention. . . .

"The almost superhuman capacity of the Chancellor for work, sometimes creating, and sometimes appropriating and sifting the labours of others, his power of solving the most difficult problems, of at once seeing the right thing, and of ordering only what could be practically done, was, perhaps, never so wonderfully displayed as at this time; and this inexhaustible power of work was the more remarkable as his strength was kept up with so little sleep. The Count differed from other men in the matter of sleep, and he arranged his meal-times in a peculiar manner. Early in the morning he took a cup of tea, and perhaps one or two eggs; after that, generally nothing till dinner in the evening. He very seldom took a second breakfast, and then only tea, which was served between nine and ten o'clock. Thus, with very few exceptions, he ate only once during the four and twenty hours, but then, like Frederick the Great, he ate plentifully and with appetite."

Gravelotte was the first battle of the war witnessed by Bismarck—as it was the bloodiest of all. At the

side of the King he had again, as at Königgrätz, been exposed to a fearful shell-fire; and it was he who, by the glimmer of a bivouac-fire, amid all the ghastly havoc of the fray, penned to Queen Augusta, at the dictation of the King, the famous telegram of victory. The Crown Prince had already fought and won Weissenburg and Wörth over MacMahon, while Steinmetz, on the left at Spicheren, had equally demolished Frossard's Corps. Gravelotte was the sequel to Mars-la-Tour, fought a couple of days previously—a battle in which the Chancellor's two sons, serving as private troopers in the 1st Dragoon Guards (now the "Queen of England's Own"), had taken part in a Balaclava-like charge, one of them, Herbert, being wounded. When the French accused Bismarck of having been the deliberate contriver of the war, they were probably unaware of the great private stake which he himself had in the conflict, and of the strong personal reasons which he had for averting it.

Sedan was swift to follow Gravelotte. Practically, the war only lasted a month. It was on the 2nd August that the King had assumed command of his armies at Mayence, and by the 2nd September Napoleon was his prisoner. Standing on the hill-slope of Frenois with the King's brilliant suite of Princes and Generals, Bismarck had watched, as from the dress-circle in a theatre, the course of the stupendous conflict round Sedan (1st September), which resulted in the crowning achievement of Moltke's genius—the complete environment and capture of MacMahon's forces by the combined armies of the Crown Princes of Prussia and Saxony. And what must have been the Chancellor's feelings when General Reille rode up to the King with a letter from Napoleon himself saying

that, as he had been unable to die amongst his troops, there was nothing left for him now but to surrender his sword to his Prussian Majesty. While the King returned to his quarters at Vendresse, Bismarck remained behind at Donchery with Moltke, Blumenthal, and several other staff officers to treat with Generals de Wimpffen and Castelnau for the disposal of the French Army. De Wimpffen pleaded very hard for some mitigation of Moltke's curt and cruel terms, "the whole French army to surrender unconditionally as prisoners of war"; but the great strategist was inexorable, and the Chancellor not less so.

All that De Wimpffen could achieve was a prolongation of the armistice by a few hours (from four to nine next morning). Rising early that morning (2nd September), Napoleon, accompanied by several of his Generals, drove out of Sedan towards the village of Donchery with the view of finding the King, or his Chancellor at least, and making a personal appeal for more merciful, more magnanimous conditions; and Bismarck, apprised beforehand of the Emperor's coming, had got up and galloped off, "unwashed and unbreakfasted," to meet his fallen Majesty. The two entered a weaver's cottage by the roadside and engaged in serious conversation. "In a small, one-windowed room," said Bismarck, "with a deal table and two rush-bottomed chairs, we sat alone for about an hour, a great contrast to our last meeting in the Tuileries in 1867. Our conversation was a difficult thing, wanting, as I did, to avoid touching on topics which could not but painfully affect the man whom God's almighty hand had cast down."

Napoleon pleaded very hard to be allowed to see the King, but Bismarck showed that this was impossible

before the terms of the capitulation were settled. Accordingly, settled and signed they presently were in the neighbouring château of Bellevue. Napoleon had at last bowed to the inevitable—and then, but only then, did King William deign to come and see his Imperial captive prior to his removal to Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel. The two were closeted for about a quarter of an hour, and an interesting record of their conversation may be found in the Crown Prince's diary of the war. That same night, King William and his suite (including Bismarck), rode for five hours all round the German positions, being everywhere received by his victorious troops with indescribable enthusiasm; and next day at a banquet, when champagne was served for the first time during the war, his Majesty said:—

"We must to-day out of gratitude drink the health of my brave army. You, General von Roon, as Minister of War, whetted our sword; you, General von Moltke, wielded it; and you, Count Bismarck, have brought Prussia to its present pre-eminence by the way in which you have directed its policy for several years. Let us, therefore, drink to the well-being of this army, of the three persons I have named, and of everyone else who has contributed to our successes up to the present to the best of his ability."

In about a fortnight from this time, the Uhlans having meanwhile pushed on within sight of Paris, a mediatorial communication (brought by Mr., afterwards Sir Edward, Malet, the son of Bismarck's old Frankfort friend and fellow-sportsman, Sir Alexander Malet), reached the Chancellor at Meaux from Lord Lyons, English Ambassador, asking whether he would receive M. Jules Favre to confer with him as to the terms of an armistice. Two days after Sedan the Second Empire had given place to the Third Republic, and in the name of this Republic M. Favre had flung his

"*pas un pouce de notre territoire, pas une pierre de nos fortresses!*" in the teeth of the advancing Teutons, whose Chancellor, in a circular to the foreign agents of Germany, had already named Metz and Strassburg as two of the indispensable conditions of peace. Rather, however, than conclude such a humiliating peace, M. Favre declared that "France would immolate herself on the altar of self-defence."

The meeting between Bismarck and this resolute French patriot took place in the château of Haute Maison, belonging to a Comte de Killac; but this interview, as well as two others at Baron Rothschild's magnificent château of Ferrières (where the Chancellor had meanwhile found his Capua) came to nothing. Favre's object in procuring a truce was to allow of the summoning of a National Assembly to ratify the Provisional Government of National Defence, and thus provide France with a properly constituted authority for the conclusion of peace. Favre wanted an armistice of fifteen days; and for this Bismarck's main condition was the surrender of Strassburg, Toul, and Bitsch. It was to no purpose that Favre—"a somewhat Jewish-looking man with a hanging under-lip"—burst into tears, and "shook with anguish," and "nearly fainted" at all this, and declaimed on the enormity of Bismarck's thus seeking "to humiliate and dishonour France." The Chancellor pointed out, to the horror of his visitor, "that the honour of France was not anything essentially different from that of all other nations . . . and that the violent and unjust conquests (Alsace-Lorraine) of Louis XIV. were not more closely bound up with the honour of France than those of the First Republic or the First Empire"—with more reasoning of the same kind.

Speaking afterwards of his futile interviews with Favre, Bismarck said:—

"It is true, he seemed to be crying, and I endeavoured in a fashion to console him; but when I looked a little closer, I positively believe that he had not shed a tear. He intended, probably, to work upon my feelings with a little theatrical performance, as the Parisian advocates work upon their public. I am almost convinced that at Ferrières, too, he was painted white, especially the second time. That morning, in his part of the injured and much-suffering man, he looked much greyer than he did before. It is possible, of course, that he feels all this; but he is no politician. He ought to know that bursts of feeling are out of place in politics."

It was a hint of the same kind that Bismarck conveyed to the neutral Powers—on M. Thiers starting off on a tour among the European Courts with the view of soliciting intervention of some kind or other in favour of vanquished and despairing France—when he solemnly warned them against "committing an act of cruelty to the French nation by permitting the Paris Government to flatter the people with hopes of intervention which cannot be realised, and can only serve to prolong the contest."

From Ferrières Bismarck removed to Versailles on the 5th October, and here he remained till the 6th March, quartered in the house of Madame Jessé, which "stood in the Rue de Provence, connecting the Avenue de Saint Cloud, near its upper end, with the Boulevard de la Reine, and was numbered 14." His stay, therefore, at Versailles lasted just five months, and this was the busiest period of his life. His first care was to find a French Government with which he could treat for peace, but the discovery of such a thing was by no means an easy matter. Shortly before the capitulation of Metz (28th October), an emissary from Gambetta had

called and asked whether he would recognise the Republic. "Without doubt or hesitation," Bismarck replied; "not merely a Republic, but, if you like, a Gambetta dynasty, only that dynasty must give us a secure and advantageous peace, and, in fact, any dynasty, whether of Bleichröder or of Rothschild." He was even willing to consider the possibility of a Bonapartist restoration, and it was in this frame of mind that he hesitated not to receive General Boyer, whom Bazaine had sent out from beleaguered Metz; but the negotiations fell through, and Metz, like Sedan, presently had to surrender at discretion.

Metz fell, as Strassburg had fallen before it, and with it the last hope and prop of the Empire. Nevertheless, its place had not yet been taken by a Government with which Bismarck could properly negotiate for a lasting peace. Through the medium of the American General Burnside, he had again submitted certain proposals to the Government in Paris with the view of enabling it to proceed with the elections; but the General soon returned to Versailles, *re infectâ*, with the impression that he had ventured into "*un hôpital de fous habité par des singes*,"—say a "Bedlam of monkeys." Gambetta had been borne out of Paris on the wings of a gas-balloon—fit emblem of his own inflated eloquence—and on descending from what was really his native element to the solid earth he hastened to frustrate the proposed elections, which only had the effect of making the Germans redouble their efforts to bring the capital to its senses. It was to no purpose that Lord Granville made another attempt to intercede for Paris. His Lordship was told, in effect, that fine sentiment could have no place in politics, still less in war.

Meanwhile M. Thiers had returned from his fruitless tour among the European Courts; and now, after having been admitted to Paris to confer with the Provisional Government, he went to Versailles to make a second attempt to negotiate a truce. He bargained as hard as ever he could for a whole week, but his arguments and his eloquence were equally lost on Bismarck. Thiers had insisted above all things on the revictualling of the capital, but as he refused to offer the Germans any due equivalent—such as the cession of one or two of the Paris forts—the negotiations again came to nothing.

In the meantime Bismarck's attention had suddenly come to be occupied with a very grave international question—that of the Black Sea Clause of the Treaty of Paris, which restricted the right of Russia to maintain ships of war in the Euxine. On the very day (31st October) that had seen M. Thiers arrive at Versailles to ask for a truce, Prince Gortchakoff had declared that Russia would henceforth not deem herself bound by the Clause in question; and General Annenkoff was despatched with a missive to that effect from the Tsar to his uncle, the King of Prussia. "Our representatives," wrote the Crown Prince, "are to remain passive. The King is very much put out, telling me that this surprise is beyond all joke, and that in England it is sure to be regarded as an act of revenge on our part for the sale of arms (by British traders to the belligerent French). Bismarck, however, denies that he was privy to the matter." In what sense Bismarck or the Crown Prince meant this is not so clear; but the Chancellor at least could scarcely have wished to convey that a surprise had been sprung upon himself as well as upon the Prince, for a little later the

latter wrote in his Diary: "Bismarck is said to have exclaimed on receipt of Gortchakoff's note, 'The silly fellows had begun four weeks too soon.'"

That was precisely what they had done. Bismarck was not in the least surprised at this denunciation of the Black Sea Clause, for this had been secretly promised to Russia long before as the price of her neutrality in the war. Of that there can be little doubt. But Gortchakoff had been permature with his appearance upon the stage. Bismarck had expected him to wait with his *coup de theâtre* until at least the end of the war, and here he was already dancing about with the torn treaty in his hand. Mr. Odo Russell, sent by Lord Granville to Versailles to protest against this high-handed breach of public law, declared that, if Russia persisted in her intention, "England, with or without allies, would go to war." But Bismarck knew the value of these menaces far too well to attach to them the very least importance. His experiences of English statesmen during the Danish war had convinced him that they were anything but *hommes sérieux*, and least of all Ministers like Lord Granville and Mr. Gladstone "Pooh!" exclaimed the Chancellor. "Future complications? Parliamentary speechifiers who will risk nothing."

Besides, Mr. Odo Russell, with all his plastic, silken, soft-spoken ways, was the very last man in the world to impress the Iron Chancellor with a seriousness which the envoy himself could not possibly have felt. So, in spite of all his irritation at the untimeliness of Gortchakoff's appearance on the stage, Bismarck gave him his cue and helped him through with his part, passively at least. How could he possibly have done anything else in view of his past promises to Russia, the Tsar's Mos-

cow toast to the victors of Sedan, and the sending of the St. George's Cross to the great strategic winner of that unparalleled battle? And as for Bismarck doing anything to help the English in their hour of need, had they not made themselves unpopular, and even odious, to the Germans by various acts during the war? The whole thing was a pre-arranged farce, and the Black Sea dispute was presently closed, as Count Beust wrote, by the London Conference, "which gave the sanction of Europe to the act against which Europe had protested, and yet again asserted the principle that a treaty could only be altered with the concurrence of those who concluded it."

The Black Sea Conference had met in London on 17th January, and on the following day Bismarck beheld the consummation of all his gigantic labours in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. But this grand concluding tableau in the drama of German unity had been preceded by a scarcely less interesting scene in the State reception-room of the Prefecture at Versailles (the Royal headquarters), where, on Sunday, 18th December, after divine worship, King William, with the Crown Prince on his right, Bismarck on his left, and a crowd of Princes and Generals around, received a deputation from the Reichstag, headed by President Simson, praying his Majesty "to consecrate the work of unification by accepting the Imperial Crown." The Southern States of their own free will had at last begged for admission into the Confederation of the North, though they did not enter into the new national compact with the unreserved alacrity which might have been expected from the enthusiasm of the time.

There was, indeed, a great deal of disputing and

dangerous delay before the treaties of union were finally signed, and no one had been more impatient of this delay than the Crown Prince. With all his virtues as a man, there was a very deep vein of histrionic vanity in the character of this Prince, and ever since his victories at Wörth and Weissenburg, his imagination had been revelling in a dazzling dream of Imperial robes. "He was full of the princely pride," wrote his camp-companion, Freytag the novelist, "which desires what is highest for its own sake; and in his eyes the highest earthly position was that beneath the Imperial Crown." So terribly eager was he to be hailed as the heir to the Imperial Crown of Germany, and so impatient of the delay in the negotiations for union, that he even went the length of advocating the employment of coercive pressure on the will of the South. His own words are the proof of this. In his Diary he wrote (16th November):—

"Conversation with Bismarck about the German question, which he would like to see decided, but, with a shrug of the shoulders, explains all the difficulties, asking what should be done with the South Germans, and whether I wish them to be threatened. I reply, '*Ja wohl;* there would be no danger in doing that; let us act firmly and imperiously, and you will see I was right in asserting that you have not yet any proper consciousness of your power.' Bismarck would hear nothing whatever of threats, all the less as such a course would throw these States into the arms of Austria."

The Diary from which this is quoted was indiscreetly published by Dr. Geffcken, after the death of its author, with the apparent object of proving that the Crown Prince had had a much greater share in the founding of the Empire than was generally supposed. It proved at any rate that the Prince was prepared to adopt a

policy of coercion towards the South which might possibly have resulted in the absolute frustration of Bismarck's unifying work. If the Crown Prince did anything at all towards the work of unity, it was merely to suggest the name by which the national edifice should henceforth be known. If the Crown Prince drew the figurehead, it was certainly Bismarck who had built the ship. Writing to his ministerial colleague, General von Roon, as early as August, 1869, Bismarck had said: "To the mere *form* in which the King should exercise Imperial rights in Germany I have never attached particular importance, but to the *fact* of his doing so I have directed all the strength that God has given me." And the King himself was just as indifferent as his Chancellor to the question of form. "My son," said his Majesty, "is devoted to the new state of things with his whole soul, while I do not care a straw about it, and hold only to Prussia. I say that he and his successors will be called to make the Empire now established a reality."

Bismarck's wisely-waiting policy prevailed over the Crown Prince's impatient desire to force the will of the South, though not without a personal altercation, as set down in the Diary, which forcibly reminds one of the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius. The union which had now been established between North and South was by no means to his mind in all respects; but half a loaf had always been better to him than no bread, and he had even threatened to resign unless the Reichstag ratified the Federal Treaties on the terms of the South. It was then that the parliamentary deputation, headed by President Simson, came to the Prefecture at Versailles to beg King William's acceptance of the Imperial title. This was the invitation of

the German people; and the King of Bavaria had addressed a similar request to his Majesty in the name of all the German Sovereigns. Frederick William IV. had declined the Imperial Crown as being offered him only by the people. But now William I. had been asked to accept the national Crown by both people and Princes, and he could not resist the double mandate. There was some subsequent difference of opinion as to the wording of the Imperial title, but "*Deutscher Kaiser*" was at last agreed upon; and as "German Emperor" William I. was solemnly proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on 18th January, 1871, the anniversary of the day on which Frederick, the first King of Prussia, had crowned himself at Königsberg, in 1701.

The scene was perhaps the most striking and momentous which the century had ever witnessed. Gathered round the venerable King of Prussia in the storied palace of the Kings of France, stood a brilliant crowd of German Sovereigns and soldiers in a bower of banners and regimental colours representing all the contingents of the German army. "The Kings of the earth reign under me, saith the Lord," was the text of the sermon that opened the ceremony, which I must content myself by describing in the brief words of the Crown Prince:—

"The 'simple prayer' consisted in a defamatory speech on Louis XIV., and of a religio-historic essay on the signification of the 18th of January; the conclusion, however, was better. After his Majesty had read a short speech to the German Sovereigns, Bismarck stepped to the front and read in a monotonous, businesslike manner the 'Proclamation to the German People.' At the words 'multiplier of the Empire' I noticed a twitching movement in the whole assembly, which otherwise remained silent. Then the Grand Duke of Baden came to the front with his natural quiet dignity, and called out, 'Long live his Imperial Majesty the

Emperor William!' I knelt on one knee before the Emperor and kissed his hand, whereupon he raised me and embraced me in the deepest emotion."

A fortnight previous to the proclamation of the Empire, the Germans had at last begun the bombardment of Paris, of which the courage was now rapidly being sapped by the pangs of hunger. It was to no purpose that the foreign agents—who had not yet left the capital, in spite of repeated warnings to do so—protested against the bombardment as dangerous to themselves and those under their protection. But it was too late. "Address your protests," wrote Bismarck, "to the rulers of the city." The more mouths Paris had to feed, he thought, the sooner was it likely to hoist the white flag. To the diplomatic gentlemen, therefore, he replied that, more from reasons of international courtesy than of international law, he was still willing to let *them* out of their prison; but, as for their numerous countrymen, he regretted not to see any other way of liberation for them than the surrender of Paris. "We find ourselves," he concluded, "under the melancholy necessity of not being able to subordinate our military action to our sympathy with the sufferings of the civilian population of Paris."

Famine now soon brought the defenders of Paris to their senses. Six days after the ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors, the Crown Prince wrote:—

"Jan. 24.—Greatest excitement. At a conference in his Majesty's quarters attended by Moltke, Roon, and myself, Bismarck announces that Favre is prepared to conclude an armistice, surrender the forts, and lay down his weapons. He confesses that there is famine in Paris, and that '*une sédition a éclaté.*' . . Is afraid to return, and at supper with Bismarck displays the appetite of a wolf. Silence was enjoined upon us, but Bismarck, coming from the Emperor, whistled the 'Halali'—(in at the death)."

Favre had previously been refused a safe-conduct to

proceed to London and attend the Black Sea Conference, but now he was readily accorded a pass to Versailles where, after five days' negotiations, there was concluded an armistice of three weeks to allow of the election of a National Assembly and the re-victualling of Paris; while, on the other hand, the city was to pay a fine of 200,000,000 francs, disarm its walls, and hand over its outer forts to its besiegers.

The elections were held in spite of the furious opposition of Gambetta, who stumped about denouncing the Armistice Convention as worse than shameful; and on the Assembly meeting at Bordeaux, it hastened to depute M. Thiers with two members of his Ministry (MM. Favre and Picard) and fifteen deputies, to treat with Bismarck for the conclusion of peace. They reached Versailles on 21st February, and the negotiations lasted five days—days of terrible anguish to M. Thiers and his fellow commissioners.

Bismarck's conditions were brief: The cession of Alsace, including Strassburg and Belfort, part of Lorraine with Metz, and a war indemnity of six milliard francs (£240,000,000). In justice to him it must be said that he had his doubts about the political wisdom of taking Metz as well as Strassburg, but on this point he ultimately deferred to Moltke, who declared the Moselle fortress to be worth 100,000 men and absolutely essential to the military safety of Germany's western frontier. M. Thiers was aghast at these demands, and spoke of the certain intervention of Europe, unless they were abated, to save France from such cruel humiliation and dismemberment. "If you speak to me of Europe," returned the Chancellor, "I will speak to you of Napoleon and of the 100,000 bayonets which, at a wink from us, would re-seat him on his throne."

M. Thiers argued that France could never pay such a colossal sum of money as six milliards, and that it would be dishonest on her part to enter into an obligation which she had not the means of meeting. Bismarck had brought from Berlin a Jewish banker, Bleichröder, to demonstrate, not only that the payment of this money fine was quite within the financial power of France, but that it was also barely sufficient to compensate Germany for the enormous sacrifices which had been entailed upon her by the war.

"*Ah, c'est une spoliation véritable, c'est une vileté!*" at last exclaimed M. Thiers, starting up in wrath; whereupon Bismarck returned that, as his knowledge of French did not cover such expressions, he would have to continue the conversation in German. Nor did the famous little French statesman in the gold-rimmed spectacles, looking, as the Crown Prince said, "like a well-to-do banker," show himself incapable of those rhetorical "bursts of feeling" which Bismarck had found so utterly "out of place" in Jules Favre. "Rob us of our provinces," he exclaimed, "burn down our homes; strangle our peaceful inhabitants; in one word, complete your work. We shall fight you as long as our breath remains. Perhaps we shall die, but we shall never be dishonoured." This piece of declamation referred to Bismarck's insistance on Belfort—a purely French city which had never, like Metz and Strassburg, belonged to Germany in past times. It is probable that Bismarck never really wanted Belfort, and merely introduced it into his conditions as an object of barter; but at any rate he at last "announced that he would not insist on the entry of the German troops into Paris, provided we gave him Belfort." M. Favre wrote:—

"There was a minute of inexpressible agony; but we were agreed without having consulted. An exchange of glances sufficed; and M. Thiers translated their meaning into patriotic words.

"'Nothing,' he said, 'will equal the grief of Paris when it opens the gates of its undesecrated walls to the foe which could not force them. And therefore we have conjured, as we still conjure you, to spare the city this unmerited humiliation. Nevertheless, it is ready to drain the cup (of its bitterness) to the dregs in order to preserve to the nation a spot of ground and a heroic city. We thank you, M. le Comte, for this opportunity of ennobling our sacrifices. The sorrow of Paris will be the ransom of Belfort, which we now claim more persistently than ever.'"

M. Thiers saved Belfort and got the indemnity reduced to five milliards, but that was all he could do; and on Sunday, 26th February, the Peace preliminaries were signed at Versailles. Three days later, a German army of 30,000 men, after being reviewed at Longchamps by the Emperor-King, entered Paris (Bismarck riding in with it), remaining there till (3rd March) the Preliminary Treaty had been duly ratified by the Assembly at Bordeaux; and in a few more days he had returned to Berlin as Imperial German Chancellor, with a bigger and quicker record of achievement than had been made by any man of his time. Eight years previously King William had summoned him from Paris to Berlin to make him a Minister; and now, so to speak, he had returned the compliment by summoning the King from Berlin to Paris to make him an Emperor.

# CHAPTER IX.

## PEACE-KEEPER OF EUROPE.

A New International Era—Germany and Russia—France the Cinderella of Europe—Germany and Austria—A "Prince of Peace"—The Drei-Kaiser-Bund—Bismarck in St. Petersburg and Vienna—Victor Emmanuel in Berlin—France and Germany—Count Harry Arnim's Intrigues—His Trial—Bismarck's "Cold-Water Douches"—A War Scare—The Truth about it—The Eastern Question—Bismarck's "Pomeranian Musketeer"—The "Honest Broker"—Congress of Berlin—Russian Irritation against Germany—The Austro-German Alliance—Its Text—"Good Tidings of Great Joy"—The Dantzig Meeting—International Anarchy—Franco-German Relations—Tunis—The Triple Alliance—The "Uhlan King"—*Rapprochement* between France and Germany—Bismarck and England—His Colonial Schemes—Anglo-German Quarrel—Reconciliation of the Cousins—Bismarck and Egypt—The West African Conference—Its Origin and Results—The Congo State—Anglo-German Friendship—The Pope and the Chancellor—Army Bill—"*Saigner à blanc*"—France the Peace-Breaker—"Bulgaria is Hecuba to us"—The Forged Bulgarian Despatches—Death of the Old Kaiser—Travels of the New One—The "Peace-Keeper of Europe."

It was not without a good deal of dangerous friction that the relations between France and Germany again settled down into something like a normal state, and it was only by the exercise of the utmost forbearance, in the face of great provocation of various kinds from the other side of the Rhine, that Bismarck steadily adhered to his purpose of facilitating to the French the performance of their peace conditions. "It is not our

aim," he said in the Reichstag, "to injure our neighbour more than is absolutely necessary to assure for us the execution of the Treaty of Peace, but, on the contrary, to help and enable him, as far as we can do so without detriment to our own interests, to recover from the disaster that has befallen his country." In pursuance of this policy, for example, he agreed to accept financial instead of military security for payment of the second milliard—a concession which had the effect of reducing the army of occupation to only 50,000 men; and this was followed (December, 1871) by the restoration of regular diplomatic relations between the two countries—the Vicomte de Gontaud-Biron being sent as Ambassador to Berlin, and Count Harry Arnim, who had assisted Bismarck to negotiate the Treaty of Frankfort, to Paris. Bismarck was now a Prince and the possessor of a princely estate (Friedrichsruh, in the Sachsenwald, near Hamburg) which had been presented to him by his grateful Emperor for the unparalleled results of the war.

That war, among other things, had transferred the centre of gravity of the European system from Paris to Berlin, and made "deep, pious, solid and pacific Germany"—to quote the words of Carlyle—mistress of the Continent. The knell of French predominance in Europe had been sounded by the German cannon at Sedan, and a new era of international development had dawned. Art and literature might still continue to reign supreme at Paris, but the balance of military and political power had now been shifted from the banks of the Seine to the banks of the Spree; and all eyes were turned to the latter quarter to see how the rulers of united Germany would exercise their new authority. Would the new Empire be a stronghold of peace, or a

hot-bed of war? What sort of relations would it cultivate with its neighbours?

To begin with, the echoes of the triumphal entry had scarcely died away at Berlin when the Tsar, Alexander II., hastened thither to congratulate his Imperial uncle, and thank him for his passive services in the matter of the Black Sea Clause. The visit was vicariously returned a few months later by a military deputation (including Frederick Charles, the captor of Metz, and Moltke, the captor of Sedan), who went to St. Petersburg to attend the annual festival of St. George, of whose most illustrious order they had been made knights in recognition of their victories over the French. In toasting these honoured guests the Tsar made a most effusive reference to the—

"close friendship and the companionship in arms which had bound the two nations together in ever memorable days of old, which would also survive to future generations, and which formed the best pledge for the maintenance of peace and legal order in Europe."

All these things were duly noted at Paris, not without a natural feeling of bitterness; and this feeling was only intensified by the spectacle of that *rapprochement* which had now begun to set in between Germany and Austria, as well as between Germany and Russia. France had lost her luck, and consequently her friends, as most men do when they are under a cloud. Besides, France had now donned a garment which made her unpopular, and even odious, in the eyes of the purpled mighty of the earth—the simple robes of a Republic, with which the Monarchies of the Continent could not afford to associate on a footing of intimate friendship and perfect equality. Nor was anyone better aware of this than Bismarck when, in opposition to his less pro-

found and far-seeing Emperor, he strongly advocated the policy of supporting a Republic across the Rhine as being the form of government which, with its chronic dissensions, its Cabinet crises, and its general instability, would best divert the attention of the restless and revengeful nation from foreign aggression, and, above all things, render it incapable of forming alliances with monarchical States. France had some political wooers before, but none now, and it added immensely to the bitterness of her defeat to see her victors suddenly become the objects of compliment and courtship on every hand. While making enemies of the French, the Germans had conquered the friendship of their other neighbours. France was soon to become the "Cinderella" of the European sisterhood.

We have seen how the Tsar had hastened to pay his respects at Berlin, and a little later (August, 1871) the Emperors of Germany and Austria (accompanied by their respective Chancellors, Bismarck and Beust) met and cordially embraced at Salzburg—the very place where, four years previously, Napoleon had gone to sound Francis Joseph as to an anti-Prussian alliance. But Francis Joseph, with all his ill-luck and his habit of losing battles, had a marvellous talent for adapting himself to accomplished facts; and of all the facts which had forced themselves upon his recognition, none was more impressive than the complete unification of the strong and resolute Germany from which he had been expelled.

As a result of the Salzburg meeting, Count Beust, who had always been a most jealous and determined opponent of Bismarck's national policy, was now obliged to write that "these conferences have led to results which we must regard as extremely satisfactory, no less

to ourselves than also, as I would fain believe, to all Cabinets which cherish the wish to see the peace of Europe placed on a solid basis." This was a fine melodious strain, but it was the song of the dying swan. For shortly afterwards this new bond of friendship was sealed by Beust's dismissal from office, and by the appointment in his stead of Count Andrassy, a Hungarian statesman who had always honestly counselled reconciliation with Germany, and who could now therefore be more safely entrusted with the carrying out of this policy than the converted advocate of opportunist revenge. Bismarck was charmed with the character and purposes of his new fellow-Chancellor, of whom he said:—

"He is as sure of my telling him the truth, as I am of his doing so too. But in former times it was otherwise. For at the old Diet (in Frankfort) I have had Austrian colleagues to whom I said: 'It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether you speak, or whether the wind whistles down the chimney, for I don't believe a word you say.'"

Next autumn (1872) Bismarck had the satisfaction of hailing the success of one of his most warmly cherished schemes—a meeting of the three Emperors, with their respective Chancellors, at Berlin—a meeting which was the great Continental event of the year. The Prince had now become a *Friedensfanatiker*, or "fanatic for peace," as he once termed himself, and his main object was to promote a good understanding all round. It was not enough that Russia and Austria had in turn professed their friendship for regenerated Germany. Things which are equal to the same thing must needs also be equal to one another. Ever since the Crimean war, Russia had been on anything but cordial terms with Austria; and the natural resentment felt by the latter, when restrained by the Tsar from falling on the

flank of Germany during the French campaign, had not tended to improve the mutual relations of the two States. But the reasons that prompted Austria to recognise accomplished facts in Germany left her no choice as to her future attitude towards Russia, whose mighty ruler had extended his hand to Kaiser William; and therefore Francis Joseph, who had already kissed the proffered cheek of the German Emperor at Salzburg, now repaired with a double palm-branch of settled peace to Berlin, which had not beheld him for a score of previous years. Only half-a-dozen short years had elapsed since Königgrätz, and now here he was again in the capital of his conqueror.

The general result of this meeting was the informal formation of a *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, which was to dominate the politics of the Continent for the next seven years, or until replaced by the better-defined Austro-German-Italian Alliance. Bismarck afterwards said in the Reichstag :—

"The relations of the three Emperors do not at all rest upon written obligations. Not one of the three Emperors is bound to allow himself to be out-voiced by the two others. They rest on the personal sympathy and confidence of the three Monarchs, and upon the long-existing personal relations of their three leading Ministers. . . . . The meeting of the three Emperors will strengthen the confidence of our friends in the preservation of peace, and show our foes how hard it will be to break it."

The *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, which had now been formed, was certainly more personal than political in its nature; but it satisfied Europe, at least, that old hatreds had been buried, and that hands had been shaken all round by the Monarchs of the three most powerful military States. Even the ever-sensitive and suspicious French hesitated to ascribe aggressive aims to the new Alliance, while at the same time feeling that it had most deci-

dedly come between them and their hopes of revenge. Bismarck, in fact, had already begun to carry out that policy of isolating France in which lay the future welfare of the Fatherland. As against other nations the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* was a purely passive, if informal, League of Peace; and yet, perhaps, it had its aggressive aspects in the attitude into which Bismarck had endeavoured to combine the Governments of the three Emperors against the common dangers of international anarchy. The Commune had convinced him, as it had convinced Moltke, that revolutionary Socialism would prove the great peril of the future, as much so as French revengefulness; and while Germany was meanwhile quite prepared to meet the latter danger alone, Bismarck felt that the combating of anarchy could furnish the three Empires with a first interest in common, of which the pursuit would doubtless pave the way to a still closer union between them. He afterwards said:—

"I enjoyed the confidence of Alexander II. to the end of his life, to an unlimited degree. It was this that enabled me to combine Russia for years with the two other Empires—Germany and Austria-Hungary—the 'Three Emperors' Alliance.' I succeeded in showing the three Sovereigns every time they met that they had infinitely more in common to defend in the interest of 'monarchy against revolution' than they would gain by individual conquests if separated."

In the following year (May and October, 1873) Bismarck accompanied his Emperor to St. Petersburg and Vienna respectively, to return the visits of the previous autumn, and in both capitals he was of course treated with the most distinguished respect. But he never would have ventured to return to the Kaiser-Stadt so soon had he yielded to the King's method of conducting the campaign of 1866. The process of reconciliation between

the two Empires was already all but complete, and other nations were at the same time paying assiduous court to the keepers of the peace of Europe at Berlin. Not without justice did German writers boast that, whereas the Great Napoleon had to compel the Monarchies of the Continent to become his allies, *vi et armis*, the neighbours of new-born Germany began to approach her by irresistible force of political gravity. "The German Empire," said one writer, "born of a war of defence, betrays no inclination to meddle with things beyond its own borders. It threatens no one, it forces no one to come to it. It is simply there, as the centre of the earth is there, and behold! everything is beginning to approach it."

Among those who were thus attracted to Berlin no one was more welcome than Victor Emmanuel (September, 1873). His previous reception in Vienna had shown the *Re Galantuomo* that Francis Joseph had now become quite reconciled to the loss of Venetia, while Kaiser William equally strove to convince his Royal Italian visitor that he harboured no old grudge against him on account of his inclination to side with France in 1870, in spite of the services which Prussia had rendered the cause of Italian unity by the previous war. Victor Emmanuel had now come to perceive that Italy's interests were identical with those of Germany. For Bismarck was now at war with Rome, the foe of Italian unity; while, on the other hand, Italy had just as much to fear from French interference on behalf of the temporal power of the Pope, in the event of a monarchical restoration at Paris, as Bismarck had to dread a war of revenge from the same result. Bismarck doubtless showed the King the remarkable correspondence between the Pope and the Emperor which

had just taken place, and which virtually declared the firm resolution of his German Majesty to allow no "Italian priest to tithe or toll in our dominions"; and we know that the Chancellor wrote to Count Arnim, at Paris, a few months later (January, 1874): "We by no means wish to see a war break out between France and Italy, as in such an event we should be unable to refuse the latter our support."

But it was less the chances of a conflict between France and Italy than of another war between France and Germany which continued to form the Chancellor's greatest fear.

"The openness," he wrote to Arnim, "with which, since the conclusion of peace, national hatred against the Germans has been fomented and proclaimed aloud by all parties in France, leaves us in no doubt that every Government, whatever its party form, will regard the *révanche* as its chief duty."

At the same time Bismarck thought, as we have already seen, that there would, on the whole, be less danger to Germany from a Republic than from a Monarchy in France.

"My opinion," wrote Count Arnim, "is that we ought not to repel the addresses of the Bonapartists."

"A monarchical France," replied the Prince, "would meanwhile be more perilous to us than the contagious influence of republican institutions, the spectacle offered by these being more deterrent than otherwise; wherefore you are to regard my instructions on this head as unconditional, and to refrain from saying or doing anything in an opposite sense."

But Arnim did nothing of the kind. He knew that the Emperor was not exactly of the same mind as his Chancellor on this important subject, and the Bonapartists were well aware that they had more than a secret sympathiser in the person of the German Ambassador. M. Thiers suspected him of "double-dealing"

in the matter of the Evacuation Treaty, which he had been charged to negotiate; and so convinced was Bismarck himself of the justice of this suspicion that he took the matter out of the hands of Arnim altogether, and settled it offhand with the French Ambassador in Berlin. Shortly after this M. Thiers was succeeded by Marshal MacMahon, and then Bismarck roundly accused Arnim of having "facilitated, if not directly caused, this change of Government in France by thwarting his efforts to keep M. Thiers in power." Arnim hurried to Berlin to lay his case before the Emperor, who confessed that he saw no reason for his recall as demanded by Bismarck; and then the latter had a violent scene of altercation with the Ambassador, accusing him to his face of gross insubordination and intrigue. It was bad enough that, by purposely delaying the signature of the Evacuation Treaty, he had sought to overthrow M. Thiers. But he had also conspired with the Court foes of his own chief to bring about the latter's fall, and that was a crime which the Chancellor could never possibly forgive.

There was now perpetual friction between the Ambassador and his chief, and their official correspondence was nothing but acrid controversy. Several grave questions which the Count had been instructed to settle with the Government at Paris—notably, satisfaction for the violent anti-German pastorals of the French bishops—had at last to be taken out of his hands, like the Evacuation Treaty, and disposed of directly with the French Ambassador in Berlin. All this was becoming unbearable to Bismarck, who threatened to resign unless the Emperor would gratify him with the appointment of a more obedient agent at Paris. Such

a threat was never made in vain, and Arnim was now transferred to Constantinople (March, 1874).

He regarded this as a disciplinary degradation, and determined to have his revenge. He would do this by showing that he was a very much wiser man than his rancorous chief. The Kulturkampf now happened to be at its height, a war with Rome which had brought innumerable woes on Germany. Count Arnim thought he had the means of proving that, if his advice had only been followed, all these woes might have been avoided. (*Vide* p. 188.) He therefore caused to be sent to the *Presse* of Vienna the *Pro memoriâ* on the questions raised by the Vatican Council, which he had written when Minister at Rome and communicated to Dr. Döllinger.

A loud shout of applause was quick to ascend from the Clerical camp. Bismarck at once replied by publishing the dispatch by which he had at the time sought to confute the arguments of the Count, and a still louder burst of cheering rose from the Protestant lines. Then the Count threw off his mask, and openly impeached the Chancellor's Roman policy, though he still denied all responsibility for the revelations in the *Presse*. But this denial, as afterwards appeared, was a deliberate lie. Found guilty of another piece of falsehood he was placed on the retired list before he had time to take up his duties at Stamboul. Here the matter might have rested. But on his successor, Prince Hohenlohe, arriving at Paris, he found that a number of documents were missing. Arnim admitted that he had taken with him certain papers which he looked upon as private property, and would not return. He was warned of the consequences of

this act of misappropriation, but remained contumelious and uncompliant. In a few more days he was arrested and lodged in gaol at Berlin.

But I have no space to detail his sensational trial, which lasted a whole week and was followed with the deepest interest by the Press of two hemispheres. On the minor count of his indictment, the Court sentenced Arnim to three months' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal, to which both parties at once hastened, took a more severe view of Arnim's offence, and increased the term of his sentence from three to nine months, though the arm of the law could not reach him, as he had meanwhile taken the precaution to retire to Switzerland. Refusing to come and answer to a subsequent charge of high treason, in that, among other things, he had revealed certain State secrets, he was sentenced, *in contumaciam*, to five years' penal servitude. He never returned to Germany.

Apart from the deep personal interest of the Arnim trial, it was the means of throwing a flood of light, by the production of dispatches and other State documents, on the relations between France and Germany; and Europe shuddered to think how near the brink of war these two countries had repeatedly been since the Peace of Frankfort. "Germany," the Chancellor had written (January, 1874), "is sincerely desirous to live at peace with France; but, should a collision become manifestly inevitable, Germany will not be able to reconcile it with her conscience, or with her duty to her people, to await the moment that might appear most favourable to France." France was now living under the Septennate of MacMahon, who was reorganising and increasing the army in the most ominous manner, and appearing to lend his ear to the Clerical

party which, enraged at Bismarck's persecution of the Catholics in Prussia, discovered in the field of religion an additional motive for a war of revenge. The five milliards, of which the last instalment was only due in March, 1875, had all been paid over by September, 1873—those milliards which M. Thiers had declared to be wholly beyond the financial power of France; and it seemed to the Germans as if the French were really directing all their energies to the task of recovering what they had lost. Furious declamation against Germany was the daily occupation both of Press and pulpit throughout France, and Bismarck had repeatedly to turn on the diplomatic hose, so to speak, and subject the bellicose passions of the French to a process of "cold douche," or *kaltes Wasserstrahl*, as his warning dispatches were called.

Prominent among those "cold water-jets" was the severe remonstrance which Bismarck addressed to the Duc Décazes on the subject of the war in Spain, in which a German newspaper-correspondent, Captain Schmidt, had been brutally murdered by the Carlists for no other reason than that he was a German and a Protestant.

"Germany," wrote the Chancellor, "had no wish or intention to break with France; but at the same time she could no longer look with indifference on the barbarities that were being committed in the northern provinces of Spain by the Carlists, who had received material countenance in various ways, either by the omission, or by the commission, of the French authorities. And were the Carlists not at once deprived of this means of encouragement, Germany would be forced to take her own measures by blockading the coast, so as to cut the Carlists off from one of their lines of supply, and thus avenge the murder of one of her sons."

At the same time he invited all the Powers to recognise the Government of Marshal Serrano, and France

had no alternative but to "follow the example of England." For this was the ingenious formula which the Duc Décazes devised to blind his sensitive countrymen to the fact that the initiative to the step had come from Berlin, and that the first violin in the Continental orchestra, which had formerly been played by France, had now passed into the hands of Germany. Russia was the only Power which declined to take its cue from the German Chancellor in the matter of Marshal Serrano's Government, and the French at once jumped to the joyful conclusion that the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* had been exploded. "But, thank God," said Bismarck in the Reichstag, in reply to the recriminations of the Clericals, "our friendly relations with Russia still tower above the reach of all petty efforts to disturb them."

At the beginning of 1874, Cardinal Manning had expressed his conviction in the almost immediate breaking out of a war "that would, among other things, re-instate the Vicar of Christ in his rightful place"; and a twelvemonth later (January, 1875) the prophecy of his Eminence seemed to be approaching the stage of fulfilment when a Cadre Law was introduced into the French Assembly by which it was intended to give the French army such an accession of strength as would be measured in time of peace by 171 battalions more than the Germans, and by 269 battalions more than France had placed in the field in 1870. To the German mind this in itself appeared significant enough, but doubly so when these warlike preparations were considered in connection with the aggressive tone of the whole French Press. Far from having been extinguished by the Chancellor's "cold water-jet" of the previous spring, the flames of the revenge-passion now

only seemed to have been acted on as if by oil; and the memory of the Spanish incident was still rankling in the breasts of the Chauvinists. In spite of Russia's independent action in that affair, the Triple Alliance was still a fact. Italy, too, was in tacit alliance with Germany, and the Empire had just won the sympathy of the mass of the Spanish people. France was being more and more isolated by the masterly policy of the German Chancellor. The *révanchistes* had been disappointed in their hopes of the formation of a Catholic League (between Austria, France, and Italy), which seemed to be one of the possibilities of the time; but even when another war with Germany appeared to be within their reach, they shrank with apprehension from the prospect, and made what was little else than a grovelling appeal to the Tsar to save France from wanton attack and dismemberment at the hands of Germany.

For, in the spring of 1875, the French had got it fixedly into their heads that Germany was preparing to fall upon them before their military organisation was complete, and thus profit by anticipating the inevitable second conflict. Undoubtedly there was a military party at Berlin, with Moltke at its head, who strongly counselled recourse to this policy of anticipation. Bismarck himself afterwards admitted this in conversation with Dr. Hans Blum.

"In the Spring of 1875 France was so weak that, according to official assurances, the French Generals frankly declared that they would not fight, so that the world might appreciate the wantonness of a German attack. I have always considered it wicked to force on a war without provocation. That I have acted on this principle was proved on the occasion of the Luxemburg difficulty in 1867. . . . In opposition to this view of mine, the German General Staff, with the esteemed Moltke at its head, was of

opinion in 1875 that France was bent on making war against us one day, and ought to be anticipated before she was ready. Moltke and Radowitz openly declared at table that we ought to make war on France. I had no thoughts of war. I was fully occupied by the Kulturkampf, then at its height, and I insisted that the Emperor should warn the General Staff not to meddle with the affairs of the Foreign Office or with our foreign policy. I ended by succeeding in this, though by rather roundabout methods."

As to the famous *Krieg in Sicht* article, which appeared in the Berlin *Post* and created all this "war-scare," Bismarck afterwards said in the Reichstag:—

"I never knowingly caused an article to be written for the *Post;* least of all the one headed 'War in Sight.' But I did not object to that article; for I hold that when it is generally felt that a minority is egging the country on to war, people cannot make too great a noise in order to attract the majority's attention; for, as a rule, the majority does not incline towards war, which is brought on by minorities, or, in absolutist States, by the Sovereign or the Cabinet. He, however, who first shouts 'Fire!' cannot be suspected of incendiarism. Were a Minister bent upon urging the country to war in an utterly groundless cause, he would scarcely begin by kicking up a row in the Press, for that would be to summon the Fire Brigade."

Besides, the French seemed to have forgotten, if indeed they had ever taken the pains to acquaint themselves with the constitutional fact, that it was not even in the power of the German Emperor to declare an *aggressive* war without the assent of *all* the Federal Sovereigns, who most assuredly would never have consented to anything of the kind; and "the Tsar had assured General Le Flô" (I am quoting from a despatch of Prince Reuss, then German Ambassador at St. Petersburg) "that the Government of the Emperor William was most pacific in its sentiments, and was in nô wise casting about to carry out schemes of aggression." Yet, in spite of these assurances, the nervous apprehensions of the French

continued, and were only allayed when the Tsar arrived in Berlin on his way to Ems, and when Gortchakoff hastened to issue from the capital (like another Napoleon with his Berlin Decree) his famous assurance that the peace of Europe was no longer in danger of being broken. Bismarck was mortified beyond measure at the theatrical airs of a *Deus ex machinâ* which his fellow-Chancellor had assumed.

"I complained to the Tsar, when I met him, of Gortchakoff's want of honesty, stating that the latter knew quite well that I had no thought of war, and that he was acting as if Europe owed the maintenance of peace to him alone. The Tsar replied, '*Mais vous savez bien qu'il est fou de vanité.*' 'You know that his head is turned with vanity.'"

"Gortchakoff," added Bismarck, "was not then a personal enemy of mine, as he became after the Congress of Berlin, but only maliciously jealous." And to the Congress of Berlin events were now fast leading up. The Eastern question had again broken out in a very serious form, threatening the peace of Europe, as it had already plunged the Sultan into war with several of his Balkan peoples. But Bismarck's attitude to this new phase of the Eastern question was pretty much what it had been during the Crimean war. As long as German interests were not involved, his *rôle* would be a comparatively passive one. But the national interests as well as the national honour had been very much affected in his eyes by the murder of the German Consul (with his French colleague) at Salonica (May, 1876) by Mahomedan subjects of the Sultan, and then, in the most imperious manner, Bismarck insisted on the amplest satisfaction for the outrage—a request which was endorsed by the despatch of a German squadron to the scene of the murder. And when the

Sultan began to prevaricate and delay he was at once brought to his senses by the following telegram from the Chancellor: "Germany's Emperor demands instantaneous satisfaction . . . . and, in the event of refusal, we shall know what measures to take for upholding the dignity of the Empire." That was how Palmerston used to speak to foreign Powers when any Englishman had come by wrongful scaith at their hands, and it was language which now at once disposed of Germany's directest interest in the Eastern question.

Bismarck had calculated that the new fountain of moral pressure called the "European Concert" would have its due effect on the Sultan. But he had been disappointed, and things were now approaching such an acute crisis that he deemed it best to leave the two Powers chiefly interested to their own discretion. From the very first Germany had not taken the initiative to any of their common acts of Eastern policy, and now her *rôle* became more passive than ever. The thoroughgoing European Concert having broken down, Bismarck's primary object was to preserve intact Germany's relations of friendship to the other two Empires, and the task was one of exceeding delicacy. For while the interests of Russia and Austria in the East were very deep, they also began at a certain point to be divergent; and it concerned Germany, who wished to remain on good terms with both her neighbours, to avoid the alternative of espousing the cause of one or the other. The English Government had begged the intervention of Germany to induce the Tsar to accept the six months' armistice (between the Turks and the Servians); but Bismarck declined to interfere, on the plea that he did not feel justified in seeking to influence the decisions of other Powers.

"Russia and Turkey," he said, "will get tired of it in time, and Germany will then be more likely to mediate successfully than she is now. It would be inexpedient to give Russia advice just at present. Such a step would put the Russian nation out of temper, which would be more prejudicial to us than a passing difference with any Government. . . . I shall not advise our participation in the war as long as no German interest shall be called in question that may be considered worth the healthy bones of a Pomeranian musketeer."

The Constantinople Conference had ended in smoke, the Russo-Turkish war had run its course and resulted in the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano, and impatient Europe now looked to Berlin for a sign. To what extent, it was eagerly asked, had Germany's attitude been modified by the results of the war? Not in the slightest, said Bismarck, in his great speech of 19th February, 1878, when he offered his services to the Powers as an "*ehrliche Makler*," "honest broker," or mediator in the cause of peace. This broker, as he said, wanted to "do effective business," and a Congress of the Powers would enable him to do it. Only, if it met on German soil it must of course have a German President. His proposal was ultimately agreed to on all sides, and the Congress duly sat at Berlin (in the Chancellor's own palace), for exactly a month (13th June to 13th July).

"As for the Treaty of San Stefano," said Bismarck to an American visitor, General Grant, "I think the whole situation might thus be summed up: Russia has swallowed more than she can digest, and the Congress must try to give her relief." Or, in other words, the conquests and claims of Russia had to be squared with the special interests of the other Powers. "Russia," said Gortchakoff, "has brought her laurels to Berlin, and I trust the Congress will convert them into olive-branches." But this process of conversion proved a very difficult task, in spite of the fact, as Bismarck

afterwards confessed, that he had tried to act all through the Congress as "a kind of fourth plenipotentiary of Russia." At the close he had also remarked to Lord Salisbury: "I have conducted this Conference sometimes like a gentleman, and sometimes like a sergeant-major."* It was in the latter character-rôle that he had brought the Turks to their senses by telling them sharply that, unless they agreed to the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria, they would have to accept the Peace of San Stefano pure and simple; while it was as a mildly-mannered gentleman that he had hastened to mediate successfully between England and Russia when their differences about Batoum and Bulgaria reached so acute a pitch that Lord Beaconsfield had ostentatiously ordered a special train to take him and his fellow-countrymen back to London. It was perhaps the culminating point in his career when Bismarck, in closing the Congress, said that the "memorable period just elapsed could never be effaced from his memory," and when Count Andrassy, in proposing a vote of thanks to the President, said that he had invariably aimed at securing and consolidating peace.

"He has devoted all his efforts to conciliating differences, and to putting an end, as quickly as possible, to the uncertainty which weighed so heavily upon Europe. Thanks to the wisdom, to the indefatigable energy with which our President has directed our labours, he has contributed in a high degree to the prompt success of the work of pacification which we have undertaken in common."

"Peace with honour" was what Lord Beaconsfield boasted to have taken back with him to London; but,

* Told by Lord Salisbury himself when speaking at Preston, 17th October, 1893.

"peace with *dis*honour" was the corresponding result to them which the Russians beheld in the Treaty of Berlin. The Congress, in the opinion of Prince Gortchakoff, had converted Russia's laurels, not, as he hoped, into olive-branches, but into a crown of thorns. A bitter sense of shame and disappointment possessed the whole Russian people from monarch to moujik, and there arose a universal cry that the "honest broker" had betrayed them. A fine return this, forsooth, for Russia's neutrality, and other services to Germany in 1866 and 1870! The Congress, wrote Aksakoff, had planted a cap and bells on the crown of Russia, and given her a slap in the face to boot. Bismarck was denounced by the *Golos* and other journals as a traitor to the cause of Russia.

In vain was it pointed out at Berlin that, true to her attitude before and during the war, Germany had done everything she could at the Congress, consistent with her primary duty to Austria, to favour the interests of Russia; that in all the chief points of dispute with the West—Batoum, the Bulgarian frontier, Sofia, and the war indemnity—Bismarck had thrown the weight of his influence into the Russian scale, and that he would even have supported other demands of hers had he been asked to do so; but that no one could expect Germany to be more Russian than Russia herself. These arguments had no weight at St. Petersburg. "Your Majesty's Chancellor," reproachfully wrote the Tsar to his Imperial uncle at Berlin, "has forgotten the promises of 1870." "Constantinople must be conquered in Berlin;" "the road to Constantinople leads through Berlin and Vienna;" "next time the solution of the Eastern question must not be attempted on the distant banks of the Bosphorus or the Danube, the Thames or the Seine, but on the much

nearer Spree;"—such were the prospects with which Prince Gortchakoff's journal sought to console him for the "blackest page in his official career."

The relations between the two Empires grew rapidly worse and worse. A newspaper war had broken out between the two countries, and this was soon followed by a war of tariffs. The "Russification" of the Baltic provinces was proceeded with in a manner which the Germans construed as a direct provocation to themselves. Prince Gortchakoff passed through Berlin without calling on his fellow-Chancellor, while several Grand Dukes spent a large portion of this same summer (1879) at Paris, in ostentatious intercourse with French statesmen. France had long been looking for an anti-German alliance, and now the offer of one with Russia seemed to have suddenly fallen upon her as from the clouds. And to crown all these ominous signs of an impending conflict, the Russian Army, which had been vastly increased, was now being massed in menacing positions over against the German frontier.

So much was known to the outside world; but what the German public did not know of yet was a private correspondence of a very serious nature which had passed between the two Emperors. In one of these letters the Tsar requested the Emperor to order the German Delegate on the Boundary Commission at Novi-Bazar to sanction whatever his Russian colleague advised. Another message from the Tsar contained a sentence to this effect: "The Emperor William's assent to the Tsar's request is a preliminary condition of the continuance of peace between the two countries." Bismarck, who was then at Gastein, wrote to the Emperor, who had communicated to him the contents of these letters, that "if those words had been used in

an official Russian document, he could only have advised his Majesty to mobilise the German Army. He therefore begged his Majesty to invite the Tsar to communicate for the future, on this matter, through official channels." The Emperor William took this course, but so deeply affected was he by this first quarrel with his nephew that, without Bismarck's knowledge, he sent General Manteuffel to Warsaw to beg the Tsar for an interview, and finally went to Alexandrovo to meet him.

But even the cordial exchange of opinions between the two Emperors could not overcome the ill-feeling prevalent in Russia, and fomented by Gortchakoff. Bismarck, who took this Russian animosity very seriously, telegraphed to Count Andrassy to ask whether he could see him, and went at once to Vienna on receiving an affirmative answer. He informed the Austrian Minister of the correspondence between the two Emperors, and expressed great anxiety about the possible conclusion of a Franco-Russian Alliance. Andrassy answered that there was only one counterstroke to that, viz., an Austro-German Alliance. This was precisely what the Prince himself thought, and the following Treaty embodied their agreement, though it was only by another of his frequent threats to resign that Bismarck managed to procure the sanction of his own Sovereign to what he had done (7th October, 1879):—

"Article I.—If, contrary to the hope and against the sincere wish of both the high contracting parties, one of the two Empires should be attacked by Russia, then the high contracting parties bind themselves to assist each other with the entire military power of their Empires, and, accordingly, only to conclude peace by common agreement.

"Article II.—Should one of the high contracting parties be

attacked by another Power (*i.e.*, other than Russia), then the other high contracting party hereby binds itself not only not to assist the assailant of its high ally, but also at least to observe an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards its high co-party. But if, nevertheless, in such an event the attacking Power should be supported by Russia, whether in the form of active co-operation or by military measures involving menace to the attacked, then the obligation of mutual assistance with full military power, stipulated for in Article I. of this treaty, shall in this case immediately come into force, and then, also, the military operations of both the high contracting parties shall be conducted in common, until they conclude a peace in common."

It was not till about nine years later (February, 1888) that the text of this purely defensive Treaty was divulged, but the fact of its conclusion was at once made known—privately to Russia, and publicly to the world. In England it was hailed by Lord Salisbury as "good tidings of great joy," while in France, on the other hand, the impression which it produced was of a very different kind. For it was now seen by the advocates of revenge that the goal of their hopes was further off than ever, and that Bismarck had again added immensely to the wall by which, ever since the great war, he had been seeking to isolate the Republic from the rest of Europe. It was now painfully clear to France that she had been practically deprived of a possible ally in the shape of Russia, or at any rate that Germany would not stand alone in face of a Franco-Russian coalition. If there was to be war at all between France and Germany, the chances were that, as before, they would be left to fight it out themselves, seeing that, as Russia had prevented Austria from falling on the flank of Germany in 1870, so Austria would now prevent Russia from falling on Germany's rear. Equal precautions had been taken against any breach of the peace on the part of Russia, and Europe could not withhold its admiration of the splendid

checkmate which Bismarck had thus brought about with so few moves. For the ends of peace he had regrouped the Powers of Europe as effectively as he had always managed to combine divergent parties in the Reichstag for the purposes of a majority; and the Austro-German Alliance, which was now raised on the ruins of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, became the dominant factor in the further problem of international politics.

Supplemented as it was by a considerable addition to the German Army, the effect of the new Alliance in Russia was almost magical, in responsible circles at least; and the personal relations between the two Courts soon resumed the appearance, at least, of cordiality—the more so, as France had offended the Tsar by refusing to extradite Hartmann, the Nihilist, who had been concerned in a conspiracy against his Majesty's life. Bismarck now further sought to improve the relations between the estranged Empires by again uniting them on the common ground of antagonism to the revolutionary tendencies of the time; and it was on this, more than on any other ground that, when at last Alexander II. had fallen a victim to these tendencies, his son, soon after his accession, asked to meet the German Emperor at Dantzig. From that meeting Alexander III. returned home, in the words of the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg—

"with an increased feeling of tranquillity and inner contentment. In particular, the wisdom and unexpected moderation of Prince Bismarck's language made a good impression, no less on the Tsar than on M. de Giers, convincing them that in no direction has he anything but peaceful intentions. There being in reality no disquieting question of foreign policy to be dealt with, the conversation mainly turned on the means of combating the revolutionary danger, and here also Prince Bismarck recommended great caution and moderation in the matter of international measures."

Four years later these measures, as far as Germany and Russia were concerned, took the form of an Extradition Agreement of a most complaisant kind, applicable to anarchists; and altogether the official relations of the two Empires had been rather improved than otherwise by the conclusion of the Austro-German Alliance, which gave Bismarck an opportunity of proving that neither of the contracting Powers was animated by the slightest feeling of hostility towards Russia. Hitherto, Alexander III. had always been most anti-German in his feelings. But, under the responsibility of power which now weighed upon him, he was quick to recognise the wisdom of living in peace and amity with his powerful neighbours; and it was to attest the sincerity of his desire in this respect that he administered a severe reprimand to General Skobeleff for his furious Teutophobe speeches, and appointed M. de Giers to take the place of Prince Gortchakoff, whom Bismarck had always regarded as the greatest fomentor of dispeace between the two nations.

But while thus the relations between Germany and Russia had been improving, the state of tension between France and Germany had also been growing less and less acute. True, Bismarck had stubbornly refused to let the Empire take official part in the Paris Exhibition of 1878, but he had no belief in the utility of such enterprises in general, and, perhaps, also he may have wished to save Germany from another Philadelphia, from an "industrial Sedan."* On the other hand, he had been doing all he could to conciliate the French.

* In answer to the question, "What benefit is to be derived, in your Grace's opinion, from International Exhibitions?" put by a Mr. Fisher, of the *San Francisco Examiner*, and sent to Bismarck by the late United States Envoy, Mr. W. W. Phelps, Bismarck simply wrote in large letters with a pencil, "None."

As with Russia his common ground of action was the combating of anarchy, so the bond of his good understanding with France was co-operation in the work of carrying out the Treaty of Berlin. At the Congress, France had been the warmest advocate of the territorial claims of the Greeks, and when at last a supplementary Conference had to meet at Berlin to square these claims with the opposition of the Porte, it was undoubtedly the advice of Bismarck which did most to bend the will of the Sultan to the decision of Europe, and thus to avert a Græco-Turkish war. German influence, indeed, was now paramount on the Bosphorus, and for the simple reason that Germany had proved, on the whole, to be the Sultan's most disinterested "friend" in spite of the fact that Bismarck had encouraged France to take Tunis.

It was little wonder that, when the French flag finally flew over the ruins of Carthage, M. Barthélémy St. Hilaire, Foreign Minister, should have written: "We can only praise the behaviour of Germany in this important matter, and I gladly give expression to the gratitude we owe to the German Government and to the leading organs of the German Press." But the fact is that Bismarck's conduct in respect of Tunis was not altogether of the disinterested kind. It was, indeed, very much the reverse of this. For while, on one hand, he calculated that the acquisition of more African territory by France would only add to her difficulties abroad, and divert her attention from the banks of the Rhine to the banks of the Mediterranean, he foresaw, on the other, that the presence of the French in Tunis was sure to inspire the Italians with a feeling of jealousy which would probably end by throwing them into the arms of the German Powers.

Nor had his hopes in this latter respect to wait very long for fulfilment. For, in the autumn of 1881, shortly before Gambetta's accession to power in France, Bismarck had the satisfaction of seeing King Humbert pay a political visit to Vienna. A newspaper war had already broken out between Paris and Rome, and throughout all Italy there was nothing but bitter talk of French perfidy and French preponderance in the Mediterranean. King Humbert's visit to Vienna, which had been prompted from Berlin, was Italy's answer to the French occupation of Tunis; and by the following autumn (1882) the Austo-German Agreement had become converted into a Triple Alliance. Italy had thrown in her lot with that of the Central Powers, nor is it to be doubted—though the terms of the new agreement were never published—that Germany and Italy now entered into an engagement with regard to the contingency of an aggressive war by France analogous to the defensive treaty between Germany and Austria with respect to Russia.

After the rallying of Italy to the cause of the German Powers—the cause of peace—the French could not help feeling savage at the thought that Bismarck's policy of isolating them had achieved another signal success; and of this policy they beheld an equally galling triumph when King Alphonso of Spain (in the autumn of 1883) paid a visit to the allied Emperors, and returned home as the proud chief of a Lancer regiment stationed at Strassburg, the capital of reconquered Alsace. This was quite enough to make the Paris populace hiss and howl at the *roi Uhlan* who had thus accepted the livery of the foes of France, and allowed himself to be drawn within their net. And indeed the French could no longer doubt that they

had estranged the sympathies of their neighbours beyond the Pyrenees when the German Crown Prince hastened to return King Alphonso's visit, and was everywhere received in Spain with an honour and enthusiasm almost without a parallel.

In the meantime the relations of Germany and Russia had been improving so much as to draw from a Moscow journal the statement "that a war between the two Empires would be the most absurd of all absurdities." M. de Giers had made repeated pilgrimages to the German Chancellor at Friedrichsruh, each time with an olive-branch in his hand; and any ill-humour now vented in Russia was directed more perhaps against Austria than Germany. For the Bulgarian question was now again verging towards an acute phase, and Austria could not help following the progress of Russian policy in the Balkans with an equally vigilant and jealous eye. As it had been Bismarck's aim to reconcile the two Empires after the war with France, and also lessen the causes of friction between them in the diplomatic period anterior to the Balkan campaign, so now again it was his object to draw them as close to one another as they had been before the disruption of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*. At last, too, his ambition in this respect was gratified by the success of his scheme for bringing about another interview between the three Emperors, who, with their respective Chancellors, met at Skierniwiece, near Warsaw, in September, 1884—a meeting of which the Emperor Francis Joseph afterwards said that it had "testified to the resolution of the three Monarchs to maintain and secure the conditions of peace so necessary for the welfare of their peoples."

In fact, the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* might now, in a

sense, be said to have been revived as a supplementary League of Peace co-ordinate to the Triple Alliance. Germany's relations with her Imperial neighbours were now excellent. But at the same time her relations with another Empire had been rapidly going from bad to worse, and that was the British Empire. Of this estrangement the first sign to the outside world was a decided *rapprochement* between Germany and France, for had not Bismarck once said in the Reichstag that he would accept party allies wherever he could find them? Ever since the death of Gambetta, the relations between the Empire and the Republic had, on the whole, been gaining in official cordiality; and when it became known that the French Ambassador at Berlin, Baron de Courcel, had gone to Varzin shortly before the Imperial meeting at Skierniwiece, it was at once concluded that something of unusual importance was afoot. As a matter of fact, the Chancellor and the Ambassador had succeeded in establishing "perfect identity of views on certain questions of trade and territory on the west coast of Africa," on the strength of which Bismarck invited the Powers to a Conference at Berlin.

In the previous May (1884) he had written to Count Münster in London, that, unless England proved more complaisant to Germany in a certain new field of her ambition, "Germany would seek from France the assistance which she had failed to obtain from England, and would draw closer to her on the same lines on which she now endeavoured to meet England." This new field of German ambition was the ownerless, or at least unannexed, oversea world in which Bismarck, "after long thinking and beginning late," had at last decided to try the experiment of finding an outlet for the

colonial aspirations of his countrymen. Germany had plenty of colonists, but no colonies to send them to. "I am no friend of emigration," Bismarck had once said, "and I fight against it as much as I can. A German who can put off his Fatherland, like an old coat, is no longer a German for me, and my clansmanlike interest in him is gone." So at last he yielded to the popular cry, which had been growing ever louder and more general in recent years, for the founding of some kind of a new Fatherland beyond the sea which would save emigrants from the necessity of changing their nationality like a coat. For one thing, Germany now had a fleet—of which, indeed, the creation since 1870 had been a most marvellous achievement—so that there was now one objection the less to the adoption of a colonial policy, seeing that oversea possessions without a navy to protect them would be the most irrational of all insanities.

Though not so much of a *Kolonialmensch*, or colonial enthusiast, as many of his countrymen, Bismarck had already taken several tentative steps to test the real depth of the feeling throughout the nation —as when, for example (in 1880), he vainly asked the Reichstag to guarantee a South Sea Company which was to be raised on the ruins of the bankrupt Samoan house of Godeffroy. But many things had happened since then. Above all things the shrinkage of the world had been going on apace, and the Germans were afraid that, unless they made haste to appropriate some of the waste portions of the earth, the practice of land-grabbing, in which every people but themselves seemed to be indulging at a most rapacious rate would leave them nothing to annex. They must be up and doing if anything was to be done at all. Great, accordingly, was the

joy of the nation when at last Bismarck (June, 1884) announced in the Reichstag, in connection with a Bill for subsidising several steam-packet lines to Australia and the far East, that—

"the new measure was rendered expedient by the circumstance that Germany was now at last about to become a Colonial Power. Not, it was true, in the style of England, France, and other countries. There would be no State colonisation, but wherever, in the wide world, German subjects acquired ownerless land, the ægis of the Empire would be thrown around them. The Imperial flag would not precede private colonial enterprise in distant lands, but it would always follow it; and hitherto unprotected, or badly protected, Germans abroad would now be familiarised with the proud feeling of '*Civis Romanus sum.*'"

But when Bismarck made this epoch-marking announcement he was labouring under the keenest sense of irritation with England for having pursued what he described as a dog-in-the-manger policy, and done all she could to thwart the realisation of his new colonial schemes. At this time the British Government was in the hands of a Gladstone-Granville-Derby triumvirate; and certainly when the whole truth came out—which it did when Bismarck's Parliamentary White Books on the subject were responded to with a series of Blue Books giving the English version of the dispute—it could be denied by few that the English Government had acted with a semblance of jealousy, ungraciousness, and positive folly unworthy of a great and magnanimous nation. It would not give him direct answers to straightforward questions, it dawdled and shilly-shallied, and prevaricated, and bandied him about from pillar to post, from the Foreign to the Colonial Office, from the latter to the Cape, and from the Cape back again to the Colonial Office, till his patience became utterly exhausted, and there was created in him the angry feeling "that we

have not been treated by England on a footing of equality," and that "English statesmen apparently wish to apply the Monroe doctrine against the neighbourhood of other nations in Africa."

The truth is that those who are anything but serious themselves are ever slow to believe in the earnestness of others, and that this new departure of Germany had completely taken by surprise the possessors of power in Downing Street, who only awoke to a consciousness of the fact that the German Chancellor invariably meant what he said, and said what he meant, when it was too late to save themselves from the shame of almost unconditional surrender to a will which they had previously resisted. For he had at last taken the law into his own hands—taken the British bull by the horns, and unfurled the colonial flag of Germany on the South-west Coast of Africa, an act which was speedily followed by similar annexations in other parts of the Dark Continent, the Cameroons and Togo country. There may have been partial truth in the complaint of the *Times* that some of these annexations formed "sharp practice on the part of Germany, to which the history of civilised countries offered few parallels." But, on the other hand, it could not be denied that Bismarck had been irritated beyond endurance by the obstructive tactics of the British Government in the Fiji Islands, in Africa, in New Guinea, and wherever else the Germans had sought to establish a colonial foothold; and at no period of his career had the Iron Chancellor ever hesitated to meet his adversaries with their own weapons, using sleight or might as the occasion might seem to demand. Nor at any period of his career had Bismarck ever been more popular with his countrymen than when they now saw him standing up with such a stubborn courage to John

Bull, whom no Continental statesman had ever browbeaten and brought to his knees, or at any rate, to his senses, in so sharp and successful a manner before.

Never, on the other hand, had Anglophobia run so high in Germany as it now did, and this feeling was openly fomented by Bismarck himself, who, from his place in the Reichstag, continued to hurl the bitterest reproaches at England, and to lecture her Government as if it had been a parliamentary party of pure negation, the *Geist der stets verneint* of his own fractious Reichstag. He even engaged in an oratorical duel with Lord Granville as a sequel to the battle of the White and the Blue Books—as a sequel and grand finale. For by this time it had become apparent, on either side of the water, that the quarrel between the two cousins had gone far enough. Explanations from Mr. Gladstone showed that this quarrel had been partly due to a misunderstanding, based on his ignorance of a despatch from Bismarck to Count Münster, of which the contents had been meant for, but never reached, the eye of the British Premier. The Chancellor sent his son, Count Herbert, to London on a special mission of explanation and reconciliation, and then all this *irae amantium* was ended by Mr. Gladstone declaring in the House of Commons, after heartily dining on all the previous denials and other obstructive words of his Ministerial colleagues, "If Germany is to become a colonising Power, all I say is, God speed her. She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind."

The cousins' quarrel had been composed, but not before Bismarck, *more suo*, had repaid England in kind for all the unspeakable worry she had caused him. In particular, he had begun to make himself excessively

disagreeable with regard to Egypt; though not without due warning of his intention to do so. Lord Granville admitted that, in May, 1884, "Count Münster and Count Herbert Bismarck each told me that the German Government could not maintain a friendly attitude on Egyptian matters if we continued to be unfriendly on colonial questions." But this assurance had either been made light of or misunderstood in London. So friendly, indeed, had Germany hitherto been to British policy in Egypt that Bismarck had declared, "if England should prefer to annex Egypt, we should not regard it as our duty to prevent her." Lord Granville, in fact, stated in the House of Lords that Bismarck—to whom the English Government had repeatedly applied for "advice or hints" on the subject—positively advised it "to take" Egypt. Bismarck, however, hastened to correct this phrase by explaining that what he really meant was that the English should seek to become the "leaseholders" of the Sultan in Egypt, seeing that, by settling down in the Nile valley in direct agreement with the Khedive's Suzerain, they would thus obviate the odium arising from annexation of the country, and "avoid putting France and the other Powers out of temper." But whatever the interpretation which Bismarck subsequently chose to put upon the oft-solicited advice which he had given to the statesmen of Downing Street with regard to Egypt, it is certain at least that he had hastened to congratulate Lord Granville on the morrow of Tel-el-Kebir—a message, as his lordship said, which was "entirely in keeping with the friendly course Prince Bismarck had maintained towards us."

At the same time, Bismarck felt annoyed that his advice with regard to Egypt, such as it was, had not

been acted on, seeing that, if it had, as he himself contended, "many a complication, perhaps, would not have occurred." He was, in fact, disappointed and disgusted beyond measure by Mr. Gladstone's fast-and-loose Egyptian policy as being no less detrimental to the interests of Europe than to those of England. To these feelings of the Chancellor expression was at last given by Count Münster at the London Conference following on the Anglo-French Agreement (June, 1884), "that monstrous and unprecedented capitulation, showing that Mr. Gladstone was willing and glad to sacrifice every British interest in Egypt, and all the fruits of the labour of British statesmen and soldiers during the past hundred years, in the vain hope of conciliating the French." This futile Conference did nothing but prove the antagonism of the Powers to England in matters of Egyptian policy, and that Bismarck had now begun to substitute the will of united Europe for that "*gestio negotiorum*" of European interests which he had once hoped to see exercised by England alone. England had not only been thwarting his colonial schemes in the valleys of the Orange River and the Niger; she had also been disappointing his hopes of her in the valley of the Nile; and now at last he had forsaken his old love, and ranked himself in the most ostentatious manner on the side of France in pursuance of his deliberate but disregarded threat that, in the event of England not helping him with his colonial schemes, "Germany would seek from France the assistance which she had failed to obtain from England, and would draw closer to her on the same lines on which she now endeavoured to meet England."

And now I have brought my narrative back to the point where Baron de Courcel went to Varzin (shortly

before the Imperial meeting at Skierniwiece) and established "perfect identity of views" between France and Germany touching certain questions of trade territory on the West Coast of Africa, on the strength of which Bismarck invited the Powers to a Conference at Berlin.

One peculiar thing about this Conference was that the idea of it did not originate either with France or Germany, but with Portugal, and that its objects were first suggested by England. As a rule, it is the Germans who invent, and the English who turn their inventions to account—like the short and sharp-sighted fowls in the fable of Heine. But Bismarck had now begun to turn the tables on the English, for the West African Conference was intended to show the world that Germany aspired to be a centre of light and leading in commercial and colonial affairs as well as England, and disputed the latter's claim to a monopoly, or at least preponderance, of influence oversea. "That England," said the Chancellor, "in her conciousness that 'Britannia rules the waves,' looks on in some surprise when we too, her land-lubberly cousins, suddenly take to the water, is not to be wondered at." But what Englishmen wondered at more than anything was the very discourteous way in which the West African Conference had been sprung upon them. Bismarck had gruffly protested against the Congo Treaty (February, 1884) by which England, under certain conditions, recognised the doubtful, or at least debated, sovereignty of Portugal over the lower reaches of the Congo and the adjacent territory; and, in alarm at this protest, Lord Granville had at once dropped the innocent thing he held in his hand as if he had suddenly discovered it to be a viper. By a mere whiff of his breath Bismarck had blown out the light of the Congo Treaty

as a guide to the trader and the traveller in that portion of the Dark Continent; and he would now replace this twopenny tallow-candle of Anglo-Portuguese make with a more refulgent European torch.

Certainly, England had every reason to feel hurt, and even insulted, at the fact that she had not been previously taken into Germany's confidence with regard to this affair. But at this time Bismarck was in a towering passion with the powers of Downing Street; and as he had ever boasted that it was his invariable custom to pay people back in their own coin, so he now conceived that he had been altogether absolved from the obligation of showing the smallest consideration towards the English Cabinet. This Cabinet, in his opinion, had tried to lord it over him in the new field of his ambition, and he would make it rue the day that it had ever so far mistaken the character of the man it had to deal with. A statesman like Lord Palmerston or Lord Beaconsfield would most indubitably have declined an invitation to a Conference, if addressed to England in equally discourteous circumstances; but if the Gladstone Cabinet was wanting in anything it was wanting in grit, in the impressive quality of the stiff upper-lip; and it felt (Bismarck had made it feel) that it had already gone too far in braving his active displeasure. Besides, the principles of free trade and other things which the Conference had been summoned to discuss were precisely the principles which England herself had been advocating for years; and so, putting her pride in her pocket, she at last accepted the situation and attended a Conference in Berlin, which, by all the laws and traditions of her past, ought, strictly speaking, to have been held in London.

Meeting on 15th November, 1884, the Conference sat intermittently till 26th February, 1885, when it signed the General Act in which its elaborate decisions had been embodied—decisions, be it noted, of a purely doctrinaire character, for territorial questions of sovereignty had been specially excluded from the competence of the plenipotentiaries. And these decisions were but the formulation of principles affecting free trade, slave-trade, river-navigation (Congo and Niger), territorial neutrality, and territorial annexations, of which England had always been the champion; and from the Conference England emerged with every reason, on the whole, to be satisfied with its results. Bismarck, on the other hand, was pleased to think that the exercise of all these principles in Africa would now be much less subject than before to the caprice of the English, and in particular that he had strapped down his colonial opponents to a set of international rules as to the manner of making new acquisitions of land. English disregard of such rules had been the cause, he urged, of all his colonial worries; but now he had got everything reduced to philosophical system and German-like method. Perhaps, however, the most immediately practical result of the Conference was the ushering into life, as a full-blown State, of that singular enterprise to which the King of the Belgians had devoted his philanthropy and his wealth.

But the West African Conference did more than witness the birth of the Congo State. It also beheld the dawn of a new and better era in the relations between England and Germany. They had engaged in a good honest wrangle; sharp and bitter words, and even fist-shakings, had passed between them; the air had been cleared of misunderstanding; and now they

had come out of the Conference hand-in-hand to pursue in common their Heaven-appointed work of carrying the light of civilisation into the dark places of the earth. "England and Germany," said Bismarck afterwards, "are like two strong cousins who are fond of measuring their strength from time to time, but who stand back to back in mutual defence against any third party who attempts to interfere with them." On the strength of the Conference decisions they combined to blockade the East Coast of Africa, and thus stamp out the curse of slavery; they acted in harmony at the other Berlin Conference which Bismarck summoned to settle the affairs of Samoa; they concluded various agreements for the delimitation of their respective "spheres of interest" in the Dark Continent; and when, at last (1889) Bismarck came to beg the Reichstag for two million marks in aid of his policy in German East Africa, he was able to refer in the most flattering and devoted terms to "England as the old traditional ally with whom we have no conflicting interests, and with whom I wish, in colonial questions, to preserve the touch which we have now otherwise had with her for the space of a century and a half."

And, as he had thus made his peace with England, so he also managed to avoid a war with Spain about the Caroline Islands, which had also come within the sweep of his colonial net. Hitherto his remedy for such disputes had been a Conference; but now the world was astonished to hear the Chancellor declare his readiness to submit his quarrel with Spain to the arbitration of the Pope—one of whose remote predecessors had, with a stroke of his pen, parcelled out the New World between Spain and Portugal. There is every reason to believe that, before appealing to Leo XIII., the dis-

putants had virtually come to an understanding with each other, so that all that the Pope had to do as an arbitrator was to pronounce his blessing on their agreement. Nevertheless, the act was regarded at the time as one of the astutest things which Bismarck had ever done.

It was by a similar exercise of moderation that he managed to avoid a quarrel with France over certain frontier incidents in the spring of 1887—incidents to which a very serious colouring had been lent by the proposed addition of 40,000 men to the German army. And Bismarck made no secret of the main reasons for this enormous increase of Germany's fighting force. It was certainly not on account of Austria, of whom he said:—

"We now stand on such terms of mutual trust and good will with Austria as never existed before, neither during the existence of the German Bund with its written treaties, nor during the earlier days of the Holy Roman Empire. Austria and ourselves have now come to a full understanding upon all the questions which formed matters of dispute between the two countries for centuries."

And then as for Russia:—

"Our relations with Russia involved no difficulty, nor, during our wars, did our friendship with Russia suffer the slightest interruption. To-day that friendship is beyond any doubt. We expect from Russia neither an attack nor a hostile policy. Our relations with Russia, in my opinion, afford no motive for this Bill. What interest could we have in quarrelling with Russia? Surely none; and we shall never be led to quarrel with a neighbour who does not attack us in mere love for a brawl; the German Government and the political views of this country are not accessible to such barbarous motives. Consequently, peace with Russia will not be disturbed by us. Nor do I believe that Russia will attack us or seek alliances in order to attack us with others, nor that Russia will take advantage of difficulties that may arise from another quarter to attack us."

Finally, as to France :—

"Has the epoch of our frontier struggles with the French nation now been definitively closed, or has it not? I can only express my conviction that it has not. . . . . We have on our part done everything to make the French forget the past. For our part, we have not only no reason for attacking France, but also most certainly no intention of doing so. The idea of waging a war because it might appear inevitable, and threatened to be unfavourable to us later on, has ever been far from me, and I have always fought against it. . . . . If the French were to remain at peace with us until we attacked them, then peace would be assured for ever. What should we want of France? More land, forsooth! Meanwhile those in France who wish to fight with us aim at keeping up '*le feu sacré de la revanche.*' Their task was thus defined by Gambetta: '*Ne parlez jamais de la guerre, mais pensez y toujours*;' and that is still the nature of the situation in France. There they only speak of their fear of being attacked by Germany. But this apprehension is unreal, and, whoever expresses it in France knows that he is uttering an untruth. We shall not assail France. . . . Nevertheless this perpetual fanning of the '*feu sacré*' seems to me in the highest degree perilous. The probability of a French attack on us, which may not exist to-day, will arise upon the accession to power of a less pacific Government than the present, if France has any reason to believe that she can overcome us. Then I believe war will be quite certain."

I have thought it worth while to give these extracts because they give exact expression to the state of Germany's relations to her most powerful neighbours no less at the time when Bismarck thus spoke (January, 1887), than three years later, when the new Emperor "dropped his pilot." After seventeen years of dangerous and laborious navigation, this was the point to which that weather-wise and weather-beaten pilot had brought the ship of State. This ship had now nothing to fear from the armoured vessel of Austria, little or nothing to fear from that of Russia, but much to dread still from the ironclad ram of France. France was still "the pike in the European carp-pond which

prevents us," said Bismarck "from becoming carps." He believed that another war with France was only a question of time, "and when next the French attack, they will do so with the determination to bleed us almost to death, *saigner à blanc*, as they themselves say"—a metaphor taken from the butcher who hangs up a living calf by its hind legs and slowly drains away its life-blood drop by drop in order that the veal may be of the desired whiteness. It was not, however, till a year later, and then only after, by dissolving Parliament, he had appealed from party spirit to the patriotism of the nation, that he got a further addition to the fighting force of the Empire, which gave him substantial reason to boast about the irresistible power of the "*furor Teutonicus*" when once aroused, and to exclaim: "We Germans fear God and nothing else in the world; and it is love of God which causes us to love and cultivate peace."

But perhaps this immense increase of the army might have even now (1888) been denied him had not the fear of France, to which he had given such forcible expression in the previous spring, been meanwhile aggravated by a sudden outburst of anti-German feeling in Russia strangely at variance with the good relations then subsisting, as Bismarck had declared, between the two Empires. The cause of this ill-humour was all the more inexplicable as it was avowed to be due to Germany's deceitful attitude to the Bulgarian question. The "Battenberger" had abdicated, and the "Coburger" had taken his place at Sofia; but Bismarck was not conscious that his Bulgarian policy had changed in the least with the change of Princes—a policy which had ever been favourable in the highest degree to the pretensions of Russia. The Treaty of Berlin had

certainly accorded this Power a predominant influence in Bulgaria, and Bismarck, unlike most of his countrymen, had never forgotten this. It was for this reason that he had remained absolutely cold to the appeal of popular sentiment to save a German Prince from the fate which he had brought upon himself by his own waywardness. All the blubbering and sentimental declamation of the German Press at the time of the *Prinzenraub* forcibly reminded him, he said, of the player in *Hamlet* who shed real tears for the fate of Hecuba. "For what is Bulgaria to us? It is a matter of perfect indifference to us who rules in Bulgaria or what becomes of it altogether. Our friendship with Russia is much more important to us than that of Bulgaria and all Bulgaria's friends whom we have here amongst us."

This was all very fine and flattering to the Russians. But presently the Tsar came to the conclusion that, in talking thus, Bismarck was using the language of duplicity. For his Majesty had somehow come by a mass of mysterious correspondence, including an exchange of letters between Prince Ferdinand of Coburg and the German Ambassador (Prince Reuss) at Vienna, proving conclusively that Bismarck, untrue to his official assurances, had been holding out hopes of support to the new "usurper" at Sofia. What is more, the Tsar, strong with the courage of his convictions, made bold to tax the Chancellor with this scandalous act of double-dealing on the occasion of his visit to Berlin in the November of that year (1887). But what was his Majesty's surprise and sorrow on learning from the lips of the statesman whom he had believed to be capable of such hypocrisy, that the documents on which the charge against him was founded were a mass of malig-

nant forgeries, concocted for the purpose of creating dispeace between two friendly Empires. From that moment the old cordiality between them was restored, though this did not prevent Bismarck from giving to the world, in the following February, the text of the Austro-German Treaty of Defensive Alliance in order to relieve the tension of a situation which had become dangerous from its disquieting rumours.

Soon after this (March, 1888) the old Emperor William, as hoary in years as he was rich in honours, departed this life; and his very last words were an injunction to his grandson to keep on good terms with Russia. It was in compliance with this request that Bismarck, who was quite at one on the subject with the Crown Prince William, threatened to resign if the Emperor Frederick gave his assent to his English consort's scheme for wedding her second daughter, Princess Victoria, to the ex-Prince of Bulgaria, seeing that such a union would most certainly have the effect of making very bad blood between Germany and Russia. Bismarck had never been on particularly good terms with the Emperor Frederick when Crown Prince, as the published Diary of the latter —to speak of nothing else—amply shows; and still less so with his illustrious and accomplished consort, whom he ever looked upon as exercising an influence over her husband at variance with the true Conservative interests of Prussia. The Crown Prince had always been kept as much as possible in the dark with regard to important matters of foreign policy lest State secrets should thus find their way to the English Court; and it was as clear as day, when Bismarck, after the death of the Emperor Frederick, publicly accused Sir Robert Morier of having, at the time when he was *chargé d'affaires* at Darmstadt, been the means of betraying to Bazaine

the whereabouts of the German armies before Metz, that the blow in reality had a much higher aim.

In the interest of continued good relations between Germany and Russia, Bismarck successfully withstood the Battenberg marriage scheme, to which, indeed, the Emperor Frederick himself was in principle opposed; and there is reason to believe that, in doing so, he also received the hearty commendation of Queen Victoria when she visited her dying son-in-law at Charlottenburg, and was pronounced by the Chancellor to be "possessed by statesmanlike qualities of the highest order." It was from similar motives of "tender consideration" towards Russia that Bismarck counselled the new Emperor William II. to pay his first duty call at the Court of St. Petersburg a few months after his accession; though the Chancellor was not so well pleased with his impetuous young master's visit to Constantinople in the following year. "I was against that journey," he said, "simply because the diplomatists and statesmen of other countries (Russia for example) would be sure to imagine that the Sultan *y etait pour quelque chose.*"

It said much for the effectiveness of the peace policy which Bismarck had uninterruptedly pursued for nearly twenty long years that there was no country in all Europe, save France, where William II. could not be warmly welcomed. Had Germany not been in perfect accord with all the principal States of Europe, her new Emperor would not have been free to rush about as he did from Court to Court, visiting in turn St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Vienna, Rome (both the Quirinal and the Vatican), London, Athens and Stamboul. It had been entirely due to the pacific and conciliatory policy of his grandfather's Chancellor that William II. was thus able to gratify his passion for

travel and sight-seeing; and I think that one of the proudest moments of the Chancellor's life must have been when, at the side of Signor Crispi, he took part in King Humbert's triumphal entry into Berlin (May, 1889), and when the two statesmen were loudly acclaimed as the champions of the Triple Alliance which had now, for ten years, been the impregnable bulwark of the peace of Europe.

Alexander III. of Russia was called by his eulogists the "Peace-keeper" of Europe, but he had no claim to the designation in comparison with Bismarck, who had achieved for himself this proud title some considerable time before the Tsar's accession to the throne. But Bismarck had not only been the "Peace-keeper" of Europe; he had also been its "Peace-maker," which is a totally different and a much higher thing. Not only had he refrained from breaking the peace himself; he had also induced others to compound their quarrels, and thus keep it. With matchless genius for the work, he had for twenty long years conducted the foreign relations of Germany in such a way as to make her the strongest, the most trusted, and the most respected nation on the Continent of Europe—"*eine feste Burg*" of peace such as even Luther never dreamt of in his hymn.

# CHAPTER X.

## WAR WITH ROME.

The Pope and the French War—The Clerical Party—Œcumenical Council—Doctrine of Infallibility—Beginning of Kulturkampf—Anti-Papal Measures—The Prussian Bishops—"We shall not go to Canossa"—Banishment of Jesuits—Stoppage of Episcopal Pay—"Force and Fraud"—The May Laws—The Old Catholics—Cardinal Ledochovski—Civil Marriage Bill—"The best hated man in Europe"—Kullmann's Attentat—An abusive Encyclical—The "Bread-basket Law"—Prussia's "Diocletian Era"—M. Thiers on Bismarck's Church Policy—*Do ut des*—Leo XIII.—Turning of the Tide—A Dispensing Act—"*Habemus legatum!*"—An Exchange of Decorations—The Pope, Bismarck's Ally—A "Wild Goose Chase"—Bismarck beats a Chamade—And raises the Siege of Rome.

BISMARCK kept the peace of Europe, but it cannot equally be said of him that he did the same for Germany. It was, perhaps, in the very nature of his task that he should have failed to do so. This task was to consolidate the Empire which had been created by the French war, to secure it no less from external than internal foes; and foremost in the ranks of the latter, in the opinion of the Chancellor, were the followers of the Pope. Bismarck once solemnly declared himself in a position to prove "that the war of 1870 was declared in agreement with Rome, which securely reckoned on the victory of the French; and that the decision of Napoleon for peace, which only lasted half-an-hour,

was shaken and undone by the influence of none but the Jesuits," exercised, it may be added, through none other than the Empress Eugénie. This charge was fully borne out by a statement made by the Duc de Gramont to the Earl of Malmesbury, and repeated in the latter's "Memoirs." Worse than all, the French had declared war on Germany on the very day after the Œcumenical Council proclaimed the dogma of Papal Infallibility, which was in turn a virtual declaration of war by Rome against the principles of civil society. Between the two events there was, indeed, a closer connection than appeared on their surface.

The Pope had calculated on the victory of the French over heretic Germany, and on the consequent restoration of his temporal power. But, alas! for the realisation of these pious wishes, the war had only had the effect of depriving his power of its very last prop in the shape of the French bayonets that had to be recalled from Rome to help, if possible, in restoring the Empire which had been shaken to the ground at Sedan. The Pope himself had written to the Emperor at Versailles to express his "great joy" at the unification of Germany under Protestant Prussia, and this too, shortly after the Kaiser had refused the prayer of a number of Catholic deputies from Germany entreating him to restore Rome to its ecclesiastical owner. By a sweeping majority the Reichstag rejected a similar proposal, moved as an amendment to the Address in reply to the first speech from the Imperial throne, which declared that "Germany, devoted to her own domestic tasks, would pursue a policy of strict non-intervention abroad." This motion had been brought forward by the Clericals, or Centre, the new party, headed by the Hanoverian, Dr.

Windthorst, to which Sedan had given birth, as Sadowa had brought into being the National Liberals, led by the Hanoverian, Herr von Bennigsen.

But it was meanwhile outside Parliament that the Clerical party, with the Bishops in its front rank, showed most fight. When at Rome these Bishops had washed their hands of all responsibility for the dogma of infallibility, but, on returning home, they had, on second thoughts, suddenly changed their minds and swallowed it at a gulp. It was now seen that the consequences predicted by Prince Hohenlohe, Bavarian Premier, and by Count Harry Arnim, German Minister at Rome, were inevitable. In the spring of 1869, on learning that the Council would be called upon to declare the infallibility of the Pope—"whose superior power over all princes and peoples in secular things would thus become an article of faith"—Prince Hohenlohe had addressed a circular to all the representatives of Bavaria abroad with a view of inducing the European Governments to take concerted action, by protest or otherwise, against the dangerous pretensions of the Vatican. Count Arnim, on the other hand, recommended, as a preventive measure, that Germany should claim the exercise of the right accorded her at the last Council of the kind (that of Trent), of deputing to the Council several lay representatives (*Oratores*) who would make their voice heard on the question of the future relations between Church and State.

But while fully alive, none more so, to the possible effects of the infallibility doctrine on the duty of civil allegiance, Bismarck declined to adopt the prophylactic course suggested to him by Arnim, deeming it sufficient to deal with the dangers in question when

they should actually have arisen. The Chancellor confidently referred to the Legislatures of North Germany as an effective weapon (in reserve) against all ecclesiastical encroachment, but hoped that the spiritual powers would be warned in time. It was this grave initial difference of opinion between Bismarck and Arnim which made the latter claim to have been the wiser and better man of the two when their relations subsequently ended in the open rupture to which I have referred in the preceding chapter.

The Government was tolerant enough not to object to the teaching of the new infallibility dogmas in schools and universities by those who chose to do so; but when some of the professors at Bonn were threatened by the Archbishop of Cologne with suspension from office unless they did so, and when a teacher at Braunsberg was excommunicated by the Bishop of Ermeland for refusing to inculcate a doctrine which was totally repugnant to his conscience—then the State thought it was high time to interfere to protect its paid servants from such material penalties. All Prussians enjoyed perfect religious liberty, and now the Pope had stepped in to curtail them of this blessed privilege. If the State, he argued, had the right of appointing teachers, the Church at least had the power of telling them what should be taught. This was the gist of the whole dispute, which opened up such a wide field of controversy that Bismarck at once set himself to the task of better "defining the frontier between Church and State."

It was all the more necessary for him to do this, he thought, as the Jesuits had meanwhile become active political conspirators against the new Empire—stirring up the population of Poland and Alsace-Lorraine against

the new order of things, and encouraging them even to look to a French war of revenge as a means of freeing them and their Church from their Protestant oppressor. Bismarck's first reply to these tactics was the abolition of the Catholic Section of the Prussian Ministry of Public Worship, which had become little other than a Papal Nuntiature; and in December of the same year (1871) the Reichstag passed a law making it penal for clergymen "to incite to riot or otherwise endanger the peace by harangues against the Government." Then the Prussian Parliament followed suit by enacting that the inspection of all public and private schools, hitherto, as a rule, a prerogative of the Church, should henceforth lie with the State.

The Bishops had done their best to wreck the measure. They petitioned Parliament against it, and implored the Emperor-King to withhold his sanction from a law which would grievously infringe their traditional rights, and convert the schools into hot-beds of anarchy and atheism. But their fears in this respect were groundless, in view of the article in the Constitution guaranteeing confessional teaching in primary schools. They could only show their rage by bidding all their clergy set at naught the new law, which, by the way, had been drafted by the new fighting Minister of Public Worship, Dr. Falk. The Pope, on the other hand, marked his sense of the situation by refusing his assent to the appointment of Cardinal Prince Hohenlohe as German Minister at the Curia, which Bismarck had proposed as a special proof of his desire to cultivate friendly relations with the Vatican. Hitherto these relations had only been attended to by a mere *chargé d'affaires*, and Bismarck thought that the ecclesiastical rank of the proposed ambassador would be a guarantee of his

devotion to the interests of the Church as well as of the State. But Pio Nono would not hear of it. It was felt in Germany that the Pope had insulted the Emperor, and even so moderate a statesman as Herr von Bennigsen advised that diplomatic negotiations with the Vatican should now be broken off. But Bismarck was as patient as he was resolved. "Have no fear," he said, "we shall not go to Canossa either in body or in spirit"—a reference to the Emperor Henry IV.'s pilgrimage to Italy to degrade himself before Pope Gregory VII., when, in the words of Mr. Bryce, "the Imperial penitent stood barefoot and woollen-frocked on the snow three days and nights till the priest who sat within should admit and absolve him."

The Jesuits, thought Bismarck, had been at the bottom of all the mischief, and as Pius IX. seemed to be nearing the end of his life, the Chancellor already endeavoured to raise the question of his successor among the European Governments concerned; to combine them, in fact, against a Jesuit candidate for the Holy Chair. At the same time he had no difficulty in persuading the Reichstag to enact the expulsion of the Jesuits and their affiliated Orders from all Germany—a measure which caused Pio Nono to launch out into the most vehement denunciation of the Chancellor, calling him a Protestant Philip II., and saying that "a rock would yet come rolling down the hill to bruise the foot of the Colossus."

Words like these from the Vicar of Christ only tended to harden the Catholic clergy in their contumacy, and conflicts of authority between the civil and ecclesiastical powers were of frequent occurrence. The Bishops contended that, when the civil and canon law came into conflict, they were meanwhile bound to obey the latter.

The reply to this was that the State was no longer bound to fulfil its obligations towards a man who failed to perform his obligations to the State. The Bishop of Ermeland was the first to be made an example of in this respect. He had continued to excommunicate obnoxious members of his diocese in open scorn of a law which required the previous assent of the State to any action of the Church affecting the worldly well-being of any of its members, and his pay was at once stopped. His Grace proceeded against the Treasury for arrears of salary, but lost his case in every Court.

A great uproar now arose in the Clerical camp. The Prussian Bishops again met at Fulda, and drew up a document which was tantamount to an open declaration of war. At the same time the Pope essayed to hurl fresh thunderbolts from his prison-stronghold. In addressing a Consistory of Cardinals (Dec., 1872), his Holiness referred to Bismarck's ecclesiastical policy as one of "force and fraud," and accused him of "unabashed impudence" in asserting that the Catholics themselves were to blame for what had befallen them. The immediate answer to this was the recall of the German *chargé d'affaires* from Rome.

Meanwhile Dr. Falk had drafted a batch of four bills, which, after being fiercely debated for about three months, finally became part of the Statute Book as the kernel of the famous May (1873) Laws. The Bishops were furious. The Church, they urged, could not perform its true function under such restrictive measures. They were told that the true function of the Church was "the perfection of man in the sight of God," and that they could do this just as well now as before. But the May Laws, the Bishops further argued, were at variance with the Constitution; and this argument was at once

deprived of its force by the alteration of the Constitution to square with those laws. Bismarck made a splendid appeal on this subject to the Upper Chamber in a speech which might well pass for an essay by Carlyle on "Kingship and Priestcraft." The boundary, he said, between these two elements must be drawn in such a way as would permit the State to exist. "For in the kingdom of this world it has rule (*Regiment*) and precedence."

The Pope addressed himself directly to the Emperor, but was told in reply "that his Majesty was firmly resolved to preserve peace and order in his dominions from the 'State-imperilling' machinations of ecclesiastical rebels, with whose aims the religion of Jesus Christ had nothing whatever to do." At the same time the Government further exasperated the Pope by recognising the choice and consecration of the excommunicated Professor Reinkens as Bishop of the Old Catholics, who had repudiated the Vatican decrees and stood up for what they deemed to be the pure and pristine constitution of the Church. The arch-rebel Cardinal Ledochovski—the same who had sounded Bismarck at Versailles as to whether the expropriated Pope might find an asylum in Germany—was arrested for repeated acts of resistance to the law and sent to gaol. All Germany rang with internecine strife. What was lauded as condign punishment on one side was denounced as cruel persecution on the other. Soon the May Laws had to be supplemented by a Civil Marriage Law, seeing that the Government could not recognise as valid the official acts of clergymen who had been illegally installed, as thus many began to pass for married in the eye of the Church who were not so in the eye of the State. It was only after a keen

mental conflict on the subject that Bismarck yielded to the unanimous wish of the Cabinet; but he "had never," he said, "acted like the false mother in the tale of Solomon's judgment, insisting on having his own will even though the State should be rent asunder in consequence."

More resistance, and a corresponding increase of repression—such was the record of the next few years; and the Reichstag only stopped short of the guillotine, as Dr. Windthorst remarked, when it passed a law providing even the penalty of loss of subject-rights and banishment from the Empire for extreme cases of contumacy. Bismarck had already said he was proud to think that, from "the Garonne to the Vistula, and from the Baltic to the Tiber, he was at that moment the best hated man in all Europe," on account of his services in the cause of civil freedom; and so fierce was this hatred that at last a Catholic youth, Kullmann, a cooper by trade, endeavoured to shoot the Chancellor at Kissingen in the summer of 1874, and thus rid his co-religionists of their persecutor. But, though first to lift his hand, Kullmann was not the only fanatic in whom the burning controversies of the time had kindled a fell desire to destroy their illustrious author. In particular, one Duchesne, a Belgian boiler-maker, had written to the Archbishop of Paris offering to murder the despoiler of France and the oppresser of the Pope for the sum of 40,000 francs, "if you believe that God will pardon me for shortening his days."

Kullmann's *attentat* had acted like oil on the flames of civil strife; and more inflammatory fuel still was added to these flames when Bismarck announced the withdrawal of the Imperial mission from the Curia altogether. This, said the Chancellor,

"was a matter of sheer 'political decency' in view of the outrageous claims preferred by the Pope, the concession of which by any independent State would be tantamount to its passage under an ecclesiastical 'Caudine yoke.' As long as the Holy Father stirred up subjects of the Empire to rebellion, he must expect his diplomatic existence to be utterly ignored by it."

This blow was rendered all the more bitter by the publication of the circular despatch, already referred to, by which Bismarck had sought to alarm the European Governments against the pretensions of Pius IX., and to induce them to take timely precautions against a similar abuse of power on the part of his successor. To this the Pope's answer was an Encyclical (Feb., 1875), in which he characterised the policy of the "godless" chiefs of the Empire as one of "brute force," and declared to be "null and void," and of no binding force on the Catholic world, all the laws by which these "godless" chiefs had infringed the divine constitution of the Church! Rome had now dropped the mask, and stood forth in all the avowed war-drapery of the Vatican Decrees.

But Bismarck had not yet exhausted all his weapons, or, as Mr. Gladstone would have called them, the "resources of civilisation." The Papal Encyclical was at once responded to by a "Stoppage of Pay," or "Bread-basket Law," which declared that "all payments hitherto made by the State to the Catholic Church would cease, but be resumed as soon as ever the clergy thus deprived of their regular incomes should give a written promise of unconditional obedience to all the laws of the realm." The Bishops averred that an oath of subjection of the kind required of them was irreconcilable with the conscience of a Christian. They were asked, in turn, how they could reconcile their present attitude with their previous opposition to the Vatican

Decrees. They rejoined that the new law outraged the Constitution; and the Constitution was accordingly changed once more in order that it might exactly accord with the Anti-Papal laws, of which more were presently passed. The chief of these, called the "Cloister Law," dissolved and expelled from Prussia all religious Orders whatsoever, save purely Samaritan ones.

Prussia now entered on what was called the "Diocletian Era" of her history, but under all the terrible punishments to which the German Catholics exposed themselves by resistance to the law, they "stood firm as oaks," to use the words of their Papal chief. On the other hand, the attitude of the authors of the May Laws was that of Frederick William's "*rocher de bronce*," and it is perhaps not too much to say that Bismarck's popularity was never greater than when the Kulturkampf was at its height. But it gradually dawned upon him that much of Dr. Falk's legislation had been a mistake. The May Laws had sown all the land with civil strife and religious hatred, and the natural harvest was quick to appear. "Monsieur de Bismarck," said M. Thiers to Count Arnim, "is a remarkable man, but what I cannot understand from any point of view is his Church policy." A policy of "blood and iron" might do for Denmark and Austria, but it seemed to be making no impression whatever upon a spiritual Power like Rome. Above all things, that Power was served in the Imperial Parliament by a battalion of troops, commanded by Dr. Windthorst, who made it their business to block every legislative movement of the Chancellor. From this tactical point of view Bismarck was not long in coming to the conclusion that he must convert his policy of stern repression into one of *do ut des*. He

wanted his Protective Tariff passed, and he could not do this without the assistance of the Clericals. Above all things, he desired to have the co-operation of the Papacy in combating Social Democracy, which had already begun to raise its head in the most threatening manner.

The death of Pio Nono (1878), and his succession by Leo XIII. increased the Chancellor's hopes of a reconciliation with Rome; and when at last Dr. Falk was replaced by Herr von Puttkamer, it was seen that Bismarck had already entered on the path of compromise. He had been the first to admit, when the smoke of battle cleared away, that some of the May Laws had been merely made to wound, and he was now quite willing to substitute conciliation for combat. A correspondence had passed between the new Pope and the Emperor, and Bismarck himself had an interview at Kissingen with the Papal Nuntio at Munich. But for a long time no real progress could be made, seeing that, in respect of the Kulturkampf, the failing of the Vatican was like the well-known fault of the Dutch in matters of commerce. What it wanted was the complete abrogation of the May Laws, but all that was accorded it meanwhile was the relaxation of their severity. Diplomatic correspondence ensued with Cardinal Jacobini, but ended in smoke. Yet the Kulturkampf had created a state of things which demanded an urgent remedy; for, to speak of nothing else, more than 1,400 parishes were entirely without religious ministration, and the pious old Emperor was shocked to think that so many of his subjects had been thus estranged from him. "We shall try," wrote Bismarck to Prince Reuss, "to realise our intentions by legislation, without receiving or expecting from the Curia any counter-

concessions, acting simply in the interests of his Majesty's subjects."

Accordingly, the Prussian Parliament passed a Discretionary Powers (or Dispensing) Bill, which enabled the Government to provide for the cure of souls without insisting too rigorously on the letter of the May Laws. Bismarck's next advance on the path of conciliation was marked by the resumption of regular diplomatic relations with the Curia, which no longer referred to him as a "modern Attila." Herr von Schlözer was the new Minister, and a cry of *Habemus legatum!* went up from the Clerical camp. The result of this *rapprochement* was that another May Laws Amendment Act was passed the following year under Herr von Gossler, a still more conciliatory Minister than Herr von Puttkamer; and to those who accused him of eating his previous words and "going to Canossa," Bismarck said:—

"He had already taken the full resposibility for the utility of the May Laws as 'fighting laws,' but it was entirely incorrect to assert that the May Laws were a kind of 'palladium' for Prussia. The Government had never thought of making them a permanent institution. No loss of dignity could result to the King by his seeking to meet the wishes of his Catholic subjects. The Government had from the outset had the re-establishment of peace in view, and he thought that the time was now come for the abolition of the 'fighting laws.' He had fixed a limit up to which the King could accede to the requests of his Catholic subjects without in any way injuring his dignity."

Reconciliation with Rome at every cost consistent with the honour and security of the State was now the Chancellor's main object.

"In view," he said (1887), "of the heavy trials impending over us, both in domestic and foreign politics, it has been my endeavour to adjust all internal quarrels, and abandon conflicts about things which are not absolutely indispensable to the State, and to this category I assign our conflict with the Catholic Church."

It was little wonder that, when sending Bismarck the insignia of the order of Jesus Christ, in return for the Black Eagle which had been sent his Holiness from Berlin in recognition of his having acted as "honest broker" between Spain and Germany in their quarrel about the Caroline Islands, Leo XIII. should have written:—

"Your statecraft, it is well known, has contributed towards securing for the German Empire that position of power which is recognised and allowed by all, and to-day you see how, in conformity therewith, the Empire is becoming stronger and more prosperous from day to day, well provided with all the means and resources necessary for durability. But it has not escaped your wisdom how much power for the maintenance of public order and the affairs of State reposes in the authority which proceeds from us, especially when it can be exercised free from impediment."

The "impediments" here referred to were, of course, the May Laws, though these had already been so far modified by a series of Dispensing and Repeal Acts as to have made it possible for the Crown Prince to be received with much effusion at the Vatican (December, 1884), and for the Pope to beg the Chancellor for the favour of his portrait by Lenbach. The above-mentioned exchange of decorations between Rome and Berlin had prepared the world for much, yet it was fairly taken aback on hearing that the Pope had exhorted all the faithful in the Fatherland to vote for Bismarck's Military Septennate Bill (1887), which added 40,000 men to the peace effective of the German Army. No observance of his own *do ut des* principle had ever gratified Bismarck half so much as this, and another May Law Amendment Act—the sixth of its kind in as many years—was the consequence.

Had the Chancellor then, after all, "gone to Canossa," or rather sent his new Imperial master thither to do

penance for him to the Pope? For William II. had not been four months on the throne before he hastened to Rome to pay his respects no less to the Sovereign of the Vatican (whom Bismarck had addressed as "Sire!") than to the Sovereign of the Quirinal. What had now been left of the May Laws? Little, indeed, beyond the famous *Anzeigepflicht*, or duty of the Church to notify clerical nominations, the veto right of the Government in the matter of clerical appointments, and the subjection of the Church's administrative and disciplinary power to the supervision of the State. The Imperial Law against the Jesuits, it is true, still remained in force; but by dint of ten years' hard and incessant fighting, the Clericals had otherwise recovered most of their previous ground—"territory," said Bismarck, "of a pretty worthless kind—regions which I can only assign to the category of aims which the English describe as a 'wild-goose chase.'"

The truth is that, for once in his life, Bismarck had been fairly beaten. Some friends of Marshal Moltke were once discussing the merits of the greatest Generals, and telling him how his name would stand by the side of Hannibal, Cæsar, Wallenstein, Turenne, and Napoleon. "No," he said, "I have no right to stand by their side. I have never in my life conducted a retreat." Here Bismarck had the advantage of the great strategist, with whom, for the rest, he was never on particularly cordial terms. He had chosen to precipitate the war with France by converting a chamade into a fanfare, and he had been obliged to conclude his war with Rome by converting his fanfare into a chamade. Among the reasons which he had ranked up to cover his retreat was the allegation that he had been much too busy with other pressing affairs at the

breaking out of the Kulturkampf to pay sufficient heed to the anti-Papal legislation of Dr. Falk; but if Dr. Falk himself had been heard on the subject he might have placed the matter in a very different light.

Nothing had been commoner in the career of the Chancellor than the saddling of his subordinates with his own mistakes. Nero never threw more Christians to the lions than Bismarck heaved Ministers to the mob. He had immensely underrated the resisting power of the Church, and found that, by persisting in his strife with Rome, he was in danger of altogether wrecking the Empire of his own creating. Modern society had become far more endangered by the spirit of revolution than by the spirit of Rome, and it therefore behoved the rulers of Germany to come to terms with all other their less formidable domestic foes, and even enlist them on their side against the greater peril. It was for this main reason that Bismarck had dismantled his batteries and raised the siege of Rome; though whether he entitled himself to rank with the greatest Generals by conducting his retreat with as much dignified skill as he had shown dash in the delivery of his attack, is a question which his admirers will probably not care to discuss.

# CHAPTER XI.

## MAJOR-DOMO OF THE REICH.

A one-man Ministry of All the Talents—The German Constitution—Count Roon on the "Hermit of Varzin"—Alsace-Lorraine—The Milliards—War Emergency Fund—Bismarck at Home—Resignation of Prussian Premiership—Return to Office—The "Gründer-Era" Scandals—A Newspaper Law—The German Army—The Military Septennate—Judicature Act—Leipzig *versus* Berlin—Nationalisation of Railways—The Emperor's "Never!"—"Outdoor Support"—Imperial Finance—The Socialist Attentats—Anti-Socialist Law—Startling Spread of Socialism—Reform the correlative of Repression—The Chancellor's "Economic Era"—Protectionism—Robert Bruce and the Spider—Polish Policy—State Socialism—An International Labour Conference.

To create the Empire had been a very hard task, but to consolidate it proved a still harder one. When the first Imperial Parliament was opened at Berlin (March, 1871), Bismarck had almost completed his twentieth year of continuous service to the State, counting from his appointment to the old Diet at Frankfort; and during this period of incessant endeavour he had expended the energies of at least a score of ordinary men. But there was still in store for him an equally long period of uninterrupted service as Imperial Chancellor, or Major-Domo of the Reich. For it was still incumbent on him to rivet the edifice which he had raised, and the riveting was to cost him far more work and worry than the raising had ever done.

The main reason for this was that he insisted, so to say, in doing everything himself. The foreign relations of the Empire were certainly more than enough to engage his undivided attention, but his was the chief directing hand in the field of domestic affairs as well. In his own person he formed a Ministry of All the Talents. As Chancellor he was the sole responsible Minister of the Empire, and champion of the Imperial Constitution—which had simply been adapted from that of the North German Confederation to suit the new order of things. And, on the whole, it was not ill-suited to the peculiar wants and political character of the German people. The national Legislature might be described as of the bicameral kind, with no separate Sovereign veto over it, the Bundesrath, or Federal Council, forming the Upper Chamber, and the Reichstag, or Imperial Parliament, the Lower. The former was composed of delegates, or plenipotentiaries, from the Federal Sovereigns, presided over by the Chancellor; while the latter represented the German people, the deputies being returned by universal suffrage in the proportion of one to about 100,000 of the population—making the total number 397. The assent of both bodies was equally necessary to the passing of a law, which might originate with either; though, as a matter of fact, the birth-place of Bills was invariably the Federal Council. The popular Assembly could reject a Bill as absolutely as the Sovereign Council, and, when the two had once adopted a measure, it was wholly beyond the power of the Emperor to veto it.

For the Kaiser was made but the executive head of the Federal Council, and could exercise no sovereign rights apart from it in his Imperial capacity. The German Emperor has always been popularly supposed

to be a kind of military autocrat, but, as a matter of fact, there is no Sovereign in all Europe so constitutionally tied down and circumscribed as he is. For example, it is often feared that his impetuosity might cause him to plunge his people into a war. But the Emperor *cannot* declare an aggressive war without the consent of his fellow Sovereigns. He is but the executor of the combined will of the Reichstag and Bundestag, and it has repeatedly happened that he has had to carry out decisions of the latter body which, as King of Prussia, he had unsuccessfully opposed. The locating of the Imperial Supreme Court of Justice at Leipzig, instead of at Berlin, is a case in point; when Prussia was outvoted in the Federal Council by a majority of two, much to the disgust and indignation of Bismarck, though, as Chancellor, he had to bend to the decision all the same. No student of modern German history can ever attain to a clear and just apprehension of his subject until he comes to realise the fact that the German Emperor is anything but an autocrat, and that the vicarious despotic power of his Chancellor is only such as has been conferred upon him by what, on the whole, is probably one of the most evenly-balanced and beneficent constitutions in all Europe. In saying this I would only be understood to convey that it was peculiarly well-adapted to the stage of political development reached by the German people, and to the necessity of their continuing to subordinate the question of their liberties to the question of their lives, of their civic aspirations to their military security.

Yet there were many who thought that the person of Bismarck himself formed much too prominent a part in the executive machinery of the Imperial Constitution, as witness the following letter from his war-

colleague in the Prussian Cabinet, Count von Roon, to a Conservative leader:—

"The Hermit of Varzin wishes to do everything himself and yet issues the most stringent orders that he is not to be disturbed. It is enough to drive to despair an old man who would fain go to bed with a quiet mind. If Bismarck does not make all haste to bring together a first House, and the most necessary Ministers for the Empire, history will one day pronounce a severe judgment on him. Living from hand to mouth will not do for long, however dexterous and strong the hand, and however eloquent and keen the tongue. God knows that nobody wishes him better than I, as I am, so to speak, the shield on which he was uplifted. But he has too few sincere friends, and listens too much to his enemies, of whom those who idolise him are the worst. It is because I have so high an opinion of him that I should like him to be different in many respects."

This was written after Bismarck had only been about two years in harness as Chancellor of the Empire and Prussian Premier; and his pluralist duties had been of the most Herculean character. His war with Rome had already broken out, and he had also been busy garnering the results of his war with France. To him fell the organisation of Alsace-Lorraine as a Reichsland, first under a kind of dictatorship, or "kindly despotism," and then as a quasi-autonomous province duly represented in the Reichstag. His policy towards the re-conquered provinces may be briefly described. He trusted to gradual recognition on the part of the inhabitants that, on the whole, "the rule of the Germans was more benevolent and humane than that of the French, and that, under their new masters, they enjoyed a much greater degree of communal and individual freedom." In annexing Alsace-Lorraine, his primary object, he said, was not to make the inhabitants happy and contented, but to secure Germany against future aggression, and their happiness lay in

their own hands. A good deal of recalcitrancy was shown by these inhabitants in the earlier years of their new lot, but by 1879 Bismarck was able to announce that he was quite willing to confer on the provinces "the highest degree of independence compatible with the military security of the Empire"; and after this, the appointment of a Statthalter, or Viceroy, in the person of Marshal Manteuffel, relieved the Chancellor of all direct responsibility for the fate of the Reichsland.

It had been very much easier to dispose of the five milliards, which quickly found their level, like a flood of gold, throughout Germany. Among other objects to which they were devoted, were generous provision for the victims of the war, the construction of new fortresses and strategic lines of railway, the building of an Imperial fleet, the allotment of £600,000 among the leading commanders and statesmen of the war, and the assignment of forty million thalers as a *Kriegschatz*, or War Emergency Fund, without which the German Army, said Bismarck, would never be able to mobilise so swiftly as it had already done. A good deal of objection was raised to this scheme for letting such an enormous amount of money lie dead and unproductive; but to those who wished to saddle the employment of the war-treasure with parliamentary conditions, Bismarck replied that the Reichstag in such matters could not possibly claim more power than the Federal Council, which might, indeed, prevent the Emperor from declaring war, but not from mobilising the army, and ready cash must always therefore be at hand. For this simple and preliminary purpose, he said, the *Kriegschatz* no more than sufficed; and so the sum of six millions sterling in gold was forthwith consigned

to the Julius Tower, in the fortress of Spandau, there to lie like the talent of the wicked and slothful servant that was hid in the earth, secure from the fluctuations of interest and the mishaps of usurers, against the second coming of Germany's evil day.

Here, I think, I cannot do better than quote the following domestic picture of the Major-Domo of the Reich as it was drawn about this time by John Lothrop Motley, who went to Varzin on the occasion of the Chancellor's silver-wedding.

"I found him very little changed in appearance since 1864, which surprises me. He is somewhat stouter, and his face more weather-beaten, but as expressive and powerful as ever. . . Their manner of living is most unsophisticated, as you will think when I tell you that we were marched straight from the carriage into the dining-room (after a dusty, hot journey by rail and carriage of ten hours), and made to sit down and go on with the dinner, which was about half through. . . . After dinner Bismarck and I had a long walk in the woods, he talking all the time in the simplest and funniest and most interesting manner about all sorts of things that had happened in these tremendous years, but talking of them exactly as everyday people talk of everyday matters—without any affectation. The truth is, he is so entirely simple, so full of *laissez-aller*, that one is obliged *to* be saying to oneself all the time: This is the great Bismarck—the greatest living man, and one of the greatest historical characters that ever lived. When one lives familiarly with Brobdignags it seems for the moment that everybody is a Brobdignag too, that it is the regular thing to be; one forgets for the moment one's own comparatively diminutive stature. There are a great many men in certain villages that we have known, who cast a far more chilling shade over those about them than Bismarck does.

"If he had learned nothing else, he said, he had learned modesty. Certainly a more unaffected mortal never breathed, nor a more genial one. He looks like a Colossus, but his health is somewhat shattered. He can never sleep till four or five in the morning. Of course work follows him here, but as far as I have yet seen it seems to trouble him but little. He looks like a country gentleman entirely at leisure. . . The woods and park about the house are fine, but unkempt and rough, unlike an English

country-place. . . We breakfast at any hour, dine generally about half-past three, he not being allowed to dine late, and after dinner we make these sylvan excursions, and go to bed, after a scrambling, promiscuous supper, about twelve. . . His breakfast is very light—an egg and a cup of coffee—and then he has a *Meerschaum* pipe. He smokes very little now, only light tobacco in a pipe. When I last knew him he never stopped smoking the strongest cigars. Now, he tells me, he couldn't to save his life smoke a single cigar. He has a disgust for them. . . While he is sitting there and talking to all of us, his secretary hands him the piles of letters with which he is goaded in his retirement, and with a lead pencil about a foot long makes memoranda as to the answers and other dispositions to be made. Meanwhile the boys are playing billiards in another part of the same room, and a big black dog, called 'Sultan,' is rampaging generally through the apartment and joining in everybody's conversation. No dinner dressing nor evening costume. Dinner always good and simple; wine excellent. . . The intense affection which he has for his wife and children is delightful to contemplate, and as you may imagine he is absolutely worshipped by them."

It was the growing sense of physical infirmity referred to in the above extract which had caused Bismarck towards the end of the same year (1872) to ask the Emperor-King to relieve him of half his official burden—the post of Minister-President of the Prussian Cabinet. This, too, though much against his will, his Majesty at last did, with an assurance of his "undying gratitude" and the Black Eagle in Brilliants; but before the year (1873) was out, Bismarck had resumed his old office, which had meanwhile been exercised by the War Minister. This was the first of several attempts to vest the functions of Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Premier in separate persons, but in the long run they were all found to be impracticable. The threads of Prussian and Imperial policy were so closely intertwined that, to entrust them to separate hands, was like placing a couple of drivers, each with a rein, on the box of a coach and pair. The Prussian

Constitution laid down the direct responsibility of the Minister to the Crown, and not to the Premier as in England. But in the course of time Bismarck had gradually converted the Prussian theory into the English practice, and made himself virtual dictator over his Ministerial colleagues. This was, indeed, one of the things which ultimately helped to bring about his fall. But at the time of which I am now writing his will was supreme in the Prussian Cabinet, and he found it utterly impossible to conduct the domestic affairs of the Empire in particular without resuming his old post as Premier of the Monarchy. The double office was a terrible strain upon his strength, but his love of undivided power and his jealousy of others left him no choice if he was to remain Major-Domo of the Reich.

It was during Roon's interregnum, so to speak, as Prussian Premier, that the Liberal Jewish deputy, Herr Lasker, delivered his famous philippics in the Chamber on the subject of malpractices in certain high places in connection with railway concessions. The influx of the milliards had led to a period of feverish over-speculation in all the fields of commerce and business enterprise; and this *Gründer-Era*, as it was called, had led to the inevitable "Crash" (*Krach*), with its accompanying ruin to purses and reputations. Some Opposition prints even made bold to insinuate that Bismarck himself had brought his influence to bear on the Minister of Commerce, Count Itzenplitz, in favour of Herr Wagener, his old and steadfast henchman of the *Kreuz-Zeitung;* but the Chancellor courted the most searching inquiry into the matter, and emerged from the ordeal without the faintest blot on his scutcheon. With all his unique opportunities for enriching himself on the Stock Exchange by his know-

ledge of State secrets, Bismarck had never yielded to the temptation to do so—or only once, as he confessed during the French war, and that was in connection with the Neuchâtel incident of 1857. But even then he had done so against the advice of the Frankfort Rothschilds, and lost heavily by the transaction.

The *Gründer-Era* scandals, however, resulted in the resignation of Count Itzenplitz, this being the first instance in the parliamentary history of Prussia where public opinion had forced the King to part with one of his Ministers. But the voice of scandal was not even hushed by this concession; and the *Kreuz-Zeitung* carried its party spite so far—for Bismarck had now estranged the sympathies of his old Conservative friends—as to accuse him of having virtually farmed out the finances of the Empire to a Jewish banker as a requital for the services which this discriminating Hebrew had been the first to render to him in the early days of his political difficulties and pecuniary need. To this foul aspersion Bismarck could only reply by calling upon all the readers of a journal, whose reputation he had himself helped to found, to mark their sense of its baseness by ceasing to take it in; though the aristocratic subscribers to the scurrilous print "refused," in their own words, "to take their notions of honour and decency from the Herr Reichs-Kanzler."

The Chancellor's fulmination against the *Kreuz-Zeitung* was part of a general lamentation on the licence of the Press, and the inability of the law to reach some of its excesses. The Press he still looked upon in pretty much the same light as he regarded Parliament—as a necessary evil—in spite of the apparent zeal which he had shown years before in promising a Newspaper Law for the Empire. This was in the

Session of 1873, when the Government consented to make a move in the matter, but only after the Liberals themselves had taken the initiative by framing a Bill. As, however, the Liberals had shown no great eagerness to discuss matters of infinitely more account in Bismarck's eyes than the liberty of unlicensed printing, he paid them out by disappointing their hopes till next year (1874), when a law was passed, after the usual compromise, which relieved the German Press from some of the vexatious restraints under which it had hitherto sighed, though it was still far from being as free as that of England or America. At the same time it was another gratifying proof of national unity that the Press laws for all the various States had been merged in one for the whole Fatherland.

But a much better symbol of this national unity was the army, which for about four years had been under the control of one directing mind—that of Moltke—and was now, in point of organisation, equipment, and human material, the most perfect fighting machine of its kind which the world had ever seen. Germany had become a school of arms for the whole world, and no higher compliment could have been paid her military system than the fact that it was carefully copied by the nation—France—which had succumbed to its merits. It was copied by all nations, by none more sedulously than by the Japanese; and it is not too much to ascribe their subsequent marvellous victories over the Chinese to the fact that the military science of Moltke had proved too much for the philosophy of Confucius.

Moltke said that what Germany had won by the sword in half a year she would have to keep with the sword for half a century; and it was this simple argument—for Moltke's arguments were ever brief and simple—

which, more than anything else, finally induced the Reichstag to restrict its own financial power over the army. Professor Gneist, a great Constitutional authority, and Liberal Member of Parliament, had laid down that "the theory of fixing the strength of the army by an annual budget was incompatible with the idea of conscription"; and in accordance with this agreeable theory the Government had asked the Reichstag to fix the peace establishment (about 400,000 men) "until otherwise provided by law." But the Reichstag could not be prevailed upon to part so indefinitely with its power of the purse.

The Emperor, however—who could never brook to be gainsaid in military matters, however much he might bow to the will of the people in other respects—proved to be just as dogged as the Reichstag seemed determined, and it looked as if the nation were on the eve of another "Conflict Time" with its budgetless rule. But from this danger it was ultimately saved by Bismarck, who, from his bed of suffering, solemnly counselled his Majesty to accept the compromise which had meanwhile been proposed by the National Liberal, Herr von Bennigsen—ever the "honest broker" in Parliament as the Chancellor was out of it—and which fixed the peace-strength of the army for a period of seven years. This Military Septennate was repeatedly renewed, each time with an enormous increase of men, seeing that it behoved Germany to keep pace with the armaments of her neighbours, though on the last occasion (1887) Bismarck could only effect his purpose by the ever-effective means of dissolving the Reichstag. For, with all their pride in their Parliament, the Germans are still prouder of their army, knowing what it has done for them. "An appeal to fear," said Bis-

marck once, "never found an echo in German hearts," but an appeal to them about their armour ever had.

Meanwhile Bismarck's task of consolidating the Reich had been further advanced by the elaboration of a Judicature Act for the whole Empire, which also now enjoyed the benefits of Criminal and Commercial Codes, while the gigantic labour of preparing a Code Civil was being actively proceeded with. The discussion of the Judicature Act (fixed to take effect in 1879) led Bismarck to assume an attitude of such hostility to the provisions of the Act relating to the trial of Press offences, which he characteristically wished to make as rigorous as possible, that another conflict with Parliament was only avoided by the usual compromise. But on the question of establishing the Supreme Court of the Empire at Leipzig no compromise was possible, unless, indeed, it could have been agreed to locate this seat of justice half way between the Saxon city and Berlin. On this question Bismarck had to yield, for, as previously remarked, Prussia had been outvoted on the subject by the Federal Council from motives that were mixed, and there was now presented the strangely "particularist" spectacle of German Sovereignty being enthroned in one capital and German Justice in another.

In all this there was little, certainly, of the semblance of that national unity which Bismarck had been struggling so hard to complete. But the want of mere semblance here was nothing to the lack of positive substance elsewhere, above all in a field where he had hoped to find another most effective rivet for the Reich Germany was still divided between no fewer than sixty-three railway administrations, and the Chancellor's dearest aim was to evolve harmony out of all this

chaos by nationalising the lines. He had little hope that the Herculean task would be accomplished in his own lifetime, and yet he was bent on doing his utmost to translate into a living truth that article of the Constitution by which the Federal Sovereigns had bound themselves to convert all the various lines into one systematised net. In 1873 an Imperial Railway Board had been created; but time passed, and the only field of its jurisdiction continued to be Alsace-Lorraine with its strategic lines. Moltke had pointed out that the triumph of Bismarck's system would be an additional bulwark of defence to the nation, "railways in our time having become one of the most important means of warfare"; and though Parliament feared that, with a railway revenue of 800 millions, the Imperial Government would become independent of its will, Bismarck scoffed at the idea of "German freedom and unity being swept away by the first Imperial locomotive."

But the opposition of Parliament, combined with the apathy of the Federal states, proved too much for him, and all that he could meanwhile do, as a preliminary step in the desired direction, was to induce his own Prussia to perform "an act of abdication in favour of the Empire." A narrow particularism could not be laid to the charge of Bismarck, who had practically ceased to be a Prussian with the trumpet-call of Königgrätz. Devoted as he was to the institutions of his "*engeres Vaterland*," the interests of Germany, as a whole, were nevertheless very much nearer his heart, and his broad and patriotic views in this respect had even swelled the number of his foes among the Prussian Junkers. "I hold it," he said, "to be my primary duty to strengthen the power of the Empire, and not

that of a Grand-Prussianism (*Gross-Preussenthum*);" and it was for this reason that he advocated a railway "act of abdication in favour of the Empire." In the course, therefore, of the next few years the Prussian Government had bought up all the railway lines within its own territory, and though the Prussian Diet also passed a law empowering the Government to transfer these lines to the Empire, the latter has never yet shown any inclination to carry out the Chancellor's railway policy to its full extent.

Prominent among the motives which had induced Bismarck to espouse this policy was the desire to improve the finances of the Empire, and render it independent of the "matricular contributions" which, in the event of a deficit, it was entitled to receive from its component States. "An Empire," he said in 1872, "which is founded on the theory of 'matricular contributions' lacks the strong bond of cohesion that is furnished by a common system of finance." In 1875 he had failed to impose a tax on beer and bourse transactions; and two years later, just after assuring Parliament that he was meditating a thorough scheme of financial reform, the nation was startled with the news that the Chancellor had resigned. His health was bad, his foes at Court were active; he was at serious variance with some of his Ministerial colleagues, notably Herr von Stosch, chief of the Admiralty; he was being thwarted on every hand, and nothing went right with him. But neither Germany nor Europe (just on the eve of the Russo-Turkish war) would hear of his resignation, and still less the Emperor, who hastened to write his famous "Never!" on the margin of the Prince's "request for leave to resign." It has been said that no man is indispensable, but at this time

that was certainly not the belief either of the old Emperor William or the majority of his subjects.

The Prince's official labours were now lightened by the creation of a new post—that of Vice-Chancellor—which was held for about three years by Count Stolberg-Wernigerode, and then practically fell into abeyance. Herr von Bennigsen went to Varzin to negotiate the formation of a Government party out of the Conservatives and National Liberals (the latter having always proved true to Bismarck in any great emergency); the Emperor exercised the necessary pressure on Herr Camphausen, Finance Minister, and his lukewarm colleagues, and in the spring of 1878 the speech from the throne announced the introduction of Bills for raising the tobacco tax and levying further stamp duties with the view of rendering the Reich independent of its "matricular contributions," which Bismarck termed its "outdoor support."

Yet the only outcome of the Session was the fall of the Finance Minister and the reluctant granting of a meagre tax on playing-cards. Bismarck was in despair. But out of this mood he was presently aroused by the pistol-shots of the Socialist fanatic, Hödel, who had sought to murder the Emperor but a few yards from the spot where the Chancellor himself had been covered by the revolver of Ferdinand Cohen-Blind on the eve of the Austrian war. Next day there arrived in Berlin from Varzin an order to draft a law for combating the evils of Social Democracy, of which the tinker ruffian, Hödel, had been the clear outcome. In the first German Parliament this party had only been represented by two members, and these had now increased to twelve. Within the last eight years the movement had been making immense strides in Germany, as in

every other military State. Its organic existence, by a curious coincidence, dated from the time when Bismarck became Premier of Prussia. At Versailles Moltke had prophesied that Socialism, even more than France, would be Germany's great enemy in the future. Bismarck, too, had been equally alive to its danger. We have already seen that this was the ground on which he had successfully brought about a *rapprochement* of the three Empires, and even addressed the European Cabinets on the necessity of concerting common measures for combating the spirit of international revolution. It now behoved him to do this from a purely national point of view. Two years previously (1876) he had asked Parliament, but vainly, for "means, as yet quite independent of the hangman," of dealing with Social Democracy. All he begged for was a rigorous clause in the Penal Code, but it was haughtily refused; nor could the Reichstag be persuaded to approve the exceptional measure which had now been presented to it as a consequence of Hödel's crime. The cure, it was argued, would be worse than the evil, and the Bill was rejected by a sweeping majority.

A week had not elapsed since its rejection when another Socialist, Dr. Karl Nobiling, fired at and wounded the Emperor with a fowling-piece. And then Bismarck, who had returned to Varzin, ill, bitterly disappointed, and big with thoughts of resignation, hurried back to Berlin. There his resolution underwent a complete change. "After beholding my lord and King lying there in his blood," he said, "I made a silent vow that never against his will would I leave the service of a master who, on his part, had thus adventured life and limb in the performance of his duty to God and man." He hastened from the Palace and

dissolved Parliament; and its successor—which had been elected under the influence of the powerful wave of horror and indignation that swept over the Empire after this second attempt on the life of its venerable and blameless chief—ended by giving the Chancellor the repressive powers which he wanted. But it subsequently rejected the *Maulkorbgesetz*, or "muzzle measure," by which he also proposed to gag the mouths of the Social Democrats in Parliament itself.

The Anti-Socialist Law was of a most stringent character, constituting an instrument of repression such as was, perhaps, possessed by no other Government in Europe, and, though only passed for three years at a time, it was repeatedly prolonged by Parliament, and only dropped by William II. two years after his accession to the throne.* From the point of view of its authors, had the repressive measure been a success? In answer to this question let me quote a few figures. At the elections for the first German Parliament in 1871, about 100,000 Socialist votes had only been recorded; at the same elections in 1890, Bismarck's last year of office, this number had risen to 1,427,298; and three years later this number had further swelled to 1,786,738, out of a total ballot of 7,673,973. In the first German Parliament the Socialists had been represented by two members, and in the ninth (1893) by forty-two; while, judged by the number of its voters, the party was by far the strongest of all the twelve

* In the spring of 1884 it was also found necessary to supplement the law by an Explosives Act of great penal severity, which was mainly the outcome of the appalling discovery that some miscreants had conspired to blow up the Imperial family with dynamite on the day of the unveiling of the National Monument on the Niederwald (September, 1883).

fractions in the Reichstag. Had the results of the elections of 1893 been true to the principle of proportional representation, the Socialists should have been awarded about a fourth of the whole number of seats (397) in the Reichstag, and then the balance of Parliamentary power would have passed into their hands.* At the same time it must be pointed out that, though the party had thus increased so enormously during the operation of the law for its repression, it had also begun to betray a certain distrust of its extreme members, and to believe more in the efficacy of "evolution" than of "revolution" for the achievement of its aims.

But Bismarck had never surrendered himself to the illusion that the social problem of the nineteenth century could be solved as the Inquisition sought to settle the religious question of the Middle Ages. All he aimed at with the Socialist Law was merely to prevent the revolutionary movement from spreading, and to render it as innocuous as possible the while he devised radically remedial measures. He was well aware that reform must go hand in hand with repression, and accordingly there was now inaugurated what has been called the "Economic Era" of his career. Of this era Bismarck's transition from free-trade to protectionism was the first act. It had already been agreed at a conference of the Finance Ministers of all the various States that "an increase in the revenue of the Empire was indispensable, and that this increase should be sought for in the field of indirect taxation." "In re-

* The absurdities which may result from a representative system of the non-proportional kind received striking illustration from the fact that, although 3,225,000 votes had been cast for the German Army Bills (in 1893), and 4,323,000 against them, they, nevertheless, commanded a majority in the Reichstag!

vising our tariff," said Bismarck, "our own interest is the only thing that can guide us;" and this interest was more financial than protective. "Germany," he added, "could no longer be expected to remain the dupe of an honest conviction. . . . In the field of political economy the abstract doctrines of science leave me perfectly cold, my only standard of judgment being experience." In the opinion of Bismarck, the doctrines of the Cobdenites were as dangerous to the German State as the theories of the Jesuits; and the "Ultramaritimes"—as the English free-traders now began to be called in Germany—were ranked in the same hostile category as the "Ultramontanes."

But, indeed, it was only with the help of the latter that he ultimately managed to triumph over the "Ultramaritimes"; for it was the Clericals who, inspired, among other things, by hopes of future requital in the field of the Kulturkampf, had proved his best allies in the work of storming the fortress of free-trade and planting there the flag of protectionism. The battle was a long and trying one, and at no period of his career had Bismarck been exposed to such bitter attacks from his opponents. But he had ever, he said, drawn fresh comfort from the story of Robert Bruce and the spider, which "would always encourage him in the carrying out of his life-task, and whether he earned the love or hatred of his countrymen in so doing would always be a matter of complete indifference to him."

Bismarck's protective tariff formed the corner-stone of a complicated structure of financial reform which aimed at "enabling the Empire to stand on its fiscal legs"; but in the further elaboration of this structure he was not so successful. For he repeatedly failed to realise his ideal of a tobacco and schnapps monopoly,

as he also failed to establish biennial budgets, though he succeeded in changing the legislative period both in Prussia and the Empire from three to five years. Those who imagine that the German Parliament is a comparatively powerless body which merely serves as a registering machine to the will of the Government should bethink themselves of the numerous defeats which it inflicted upon the Chancellor during the "Economic Era" of his career. But even when baulked in the Parliament of the Empire, he sometimes managed to achieve his purpose in the Parliament of Prussia. In the latter Legislature he once said:—

"We must look about for means of making ourselves independent of obstruction in the Reichstag. In ordinary circumstances I should be no advocate of such a policy, but when the cause of the Fatherland is imperilled, I will not hesitate to give the Emperor becoming advice. That Minister would be a coward who did not risk his head to save his country in despite even of the will of a majority. I am not inclined to let the achievements of our army be destroyed by internal frictions, and I shall find means of obviating this."

This was said in connection with his Polish policy (1886) which caused such a sensation at the time; and for expelling thousands of Poles from Prussian Posen he was denounced as a "pitiless despot," and all what not. But he was no more of a "pitiless despot" than the American President when he refuses the hospitality of the United States to Chinese immigrants who would prove detrimental to the welfare of the native population. The multitudes of Poles whom Bismarck expelled from Posen were aliens (Russian and Austrian) who intrigued against the integrity of Prussia, and it is only flabby-minded statesmen who would tolerate such a danger in any State. But this expulsion policy had a

complement in the shape of the scheme (the Prussian Parliament voted 100,000,000 marks to carry it out) for buying out (not expropriating) Polish landowners, and parcelling out their estates to German farmers who, beginning as lease-holders, would in time acquire the freehold of the soil.

This plan for Germanising Prussian Poland was as bold an experiment as some of Bismarck's other enterprises in the field of State Socialism; for that is the only phrase which will adequately describe the Chancellor's colossal schemes for insuring the working classes against old age, illness, accidents, and indigence —schemes to which he devoted most of his time and attention until they had acquired something like practical shape before the death of the old Emperor. "You have been the brave and faithful adviser," wrote Kaiser Frederick to the Chancellor on ascending the throne, "who gave shape to the aims of my late father's policy and secured their successful realisation. I and my house are, and will remain, most grateful to you."

William II. professed himself to be equally conscious of the great things which Bismarck had done for Germany, above all with his economic measures. For his Majesty was not one of those who, while believing the Chancellor to be simply infallible in the field of foreign affairs, denied him the versatile genius which would have made him equally at home in the domain of domestic reform. To this category of doubters, however, belonged the Social Democrats themselves, who, for reasons which they never could make wholly clear to the unprejudiced mind, had always scoffed at and opposed the Chancellor's State Insurance and other schemes devised for their express benefit. Far from lessening the disaffection of the poorer classes, these

remedial schemes had only seemed to increase it. Social Democracy had become more exacting and disquieting than ever—so much so that, before William II. had been two years on the throne, his Chancellor proposed resort to a more repressive policy still. But the Reichstag would not hear of such a thing, and, indeed, the Emperor himself was at heart against the idea. His Majesty had his own thoughts about the settlement of the social question, and to these thoughts he now proceeded to give expression in the rescripts which he issued (February, 1890) as to the meeting of an International Conference at Berlin to discuss the relations of employer and employed. Of these rescripts Bismarck afterwards said:—

"The rescripts had long been a favourite idea of the Emperor's. In principle I was opposed to them; but as the Emperor insisted on their being issued, I carried my point at last as to their particular wording, in order to tone them down. The wording of them was mine, and I had no help from any of my colleagues. It was I, too, who suggested the International Conference, thinking that I ought to act as a sort of sieve or strainer, a kind of drag, so to speak, on the humane and philanthropic *élan* of our Emperor. My belief was that this Conference would condemn the undue desires of the working classes and pour water into their wine, so to speak. But even these slight expectations were disappointed, for the results of the Conference are equal to zero. No one had the courage to contradict and to direct attention to the dangers of the situation."

This International Labour Conference met in due course. But it had not sat long when the attention of Europe was completely diverted from its academic debates by the startling and momentous news that Prince Bismarck had resigned all his offices, and was no longer Chancellor of the Empire which he had served with such splendid distinction for a continuous period of twenty years.

# CHAPTER XII.

## A FALL LIKE LUCIFER'S.

"Sire, I am absolutely sure!"—A "First-Class Funeral"—"Driven away like a Dog"—Circumstances of his Resignation—Friedrichsruh a Modern Mecca—A Prince of *Dis*-peace—The Boetticher Incident—Bismarck elected to the Reichstag—Marriage of his son, Count Herbert—Germany's "Grand Old Man"—Fighting with visor up—"*J' m'en fiche*"—An implacable *frondeur*—Faults on both sides—Efforts at Reconciliation—The Kaiser's telegram from Güns—A Bottle of Hock—Bismarck in Berlin—A symbolic Steel Cuirass.

IN the previous October (1889), on the occasion of his return visit to the new German Emperor, the Tsar Alexander III. had said to Bismarck, in reply to the latter's pacific assurances, "Prince, I believe you; but are you yourself confident of the security and durability of your position?" To which the Chancellor returned, "Sire, I am absolutely sure of the unlimited confidence of my master, and persuaded that I shall remain at my post till the end of my days, at least as long as I can be of any use, and the weight of years does not destroy my health and strength." What then was the surprise of the Tsar on learning that the statesman in whom he himself reposed such confidence as a perfect guarantee of peace had suddenly quitted office! Nor was this surprise less felt by Europe at large on recalling all that the new Emperor had said and done to testify his gratitude and devotion to the old Chancellor; how he had apostrophised him as the brave, wise, and fearless

"banner-bearer of the Reich"; how he had backed him up, even against his own mother and deceased father, in the painful controversy arising out of the publication by Dr. Geffcken of the Emperor Frederick's Diary; how from all the Courts and capitals which he rushed to visit he flashed the Chancellor telegrams that read like the ardent messages of a lover to his mistress; how at the end of the year, 1888, he had prayed Heaven that he might long be "permitted to work with you for the welfare and greatness of our Fatherland"; and how he had otherwise lost no opportunity of showing the world how proud he was of his grandfather's great Chancellor.

It was only some little time after Prince Bismarck's retirement to Friedrichsruh that the world was made fully aware of the true manner of his parting from the Emperor, and public enlightenment on this interesting point came from the ex-Chancellor himself. At the time of his quitting Berlin (29 March, 1890), amid circumstances of popular demonstration and Imperial attention which caused the Prince to remark with a grim humour that he had been treated to a "first-class funeral," it was generally supposed that he had gone less by compulsion than of his own accord; and this theory of the case seemed to be borne out by the words of the rescript with which the Emperor had accepted the Prince's resignation.

But the ex-Chancellor had not been many days in the Sachsenwald, *procul negotiis*, when he used the word "*Entlassung*" (dismissal) with reference to his retirement from office; and thenceforth a very different complexion was given to the whole incident. Two days after the Emperor had accepted the resignation of his Chancellor, his Majesty telegraphed to a friend in

Weimar that "my heart feels as sorrowful as if I had again lost my grandfather" (not "father," but "father's father"), and soon after his retirement to Friedrichsruh a Conservative friend ventured to suggest that the Prince should look upon these words as a very great compliment. "What!" replied the Prince, boiling with rage, "do you call that a compliment? Why, I was driven away like a dog!"

As a matter of fact, the Chancellor had been compelled by the Emperor to resign. Certainly, grave differences of opinion had already divided master and man on the subject of the Socialist Law and the question of Ministerial responsibility (*vide* p. 209); but the spark that fired the mine was a political interview which the Chancellor had granted to Dr. Windthorst, leader of the Clericals. On hearing of this the Emperor sent his Cabinet Secretary, Herr von Lucanus, to the Chancellor with the message: "The Emperor requires that you should not receive members of the Reichstag without previously reporting to his Majesty." To this the Prince replied, "Please tell the Emperor that I allow no one to have any control over my own threshold." Next day the Emperor rose early and went to the Prince's residence, where he declared that he had every right to know of the Chancellor's negotiations with party-leaders. The Prince, however, refused to admit his Imperial master's claim, and repeated his observation of the previous night. The Emperor, in much agitation, replied, "Not even when I command you to do it as your Sovereign?" To this Bismarck rejoined, "My master's authority ends at my wife's drawing-room," and went on to state that he had only remained in office in consequence of his promise to the

old Emperor to serve his grandson. Hereupon the Emperor demanded the Prince's resignation.

Early next day, General von Hahnke, Military Secretary, repaired to the Chancellor to inform him, in continuation of the conversation of the day before, that the Emperor expected his resignation, and was willing to receive him for that purpose at two o'clock. The Prince declared that the state of his health did not admit of his going out, and that he must beg time to prepare a written communication in consequence of the Emperor's message. He then summoned a meeting of the Prussian Cabinet to communicate the facts to his colleagues, as was rendered necessary by the situation. Some hours later Herr von Lucanus went to the Chancellor's Palace with a short message about the Prince's resignation, and an expression of surprise that it had not yet been tendered. Then it was offered and accepted—with profuse expressions of gratitude for the Chancellor's past services, accompanied by the Emperor's portrait, the Prince's appointment as Colonel-General of Cavalry with the rank of Field Marshal, and his patent as Duke of Lauenburg. But as the Prince had scorned to accept the pension that was offered him for his "incomparable services," so he also declined to become entombed in his new ducal title. Once a letter arrived at Friedrichsruh, addressed to the "Duchess of Lauenburg." The Princess handed it across the table to her husband, who raised his right hand to his temple, as if saluting, and said, in a formal tone: "Delighted, madam, to make your acquaintance;" adding, "If ever I wish to travel incognito I shall call myself Duke of Lauenburg."

When first they parted, master and man, the former,

by sending a birthday messenger to Friedrichsruh, and other attentions, showed that he wished to continue on a footing of formal friendship, at least, with the man to whom he and his dynasty owed so much; and when, a fortnight after the Chancellor's departure for Berlin, a representative committee, under the President of the Reichstag, was formed for the purpose of erecting a national monument to the great national hero, now out of harness, the Emperor wrote expressing his hearty commendation of the scheme, with the hope that all classes of the population would cordially contribute to its success. But it soon became apparent that the ex-Chancellor was a man with a terrible grievance, and Friedrichsruh became a kind of modern Delphi, or latter-day Prophet's Mecca, to the pilgrims of the Press. From either hemisphere to Hamburg trooped the inquisitive knights of the pen, and the mansion house of Friedrichsruh was forthwith turned into a sort of journalistic monastery, where, as in the Middle Ages, all wayfaring brothers of the quill might count upon food, a night's lodging, and confidential converse with the Prince Prior.

On returning to Paris from the Labour Conference at Berlin, M. Jules Simon had flatteringly referred to Prince Bismarck as a "Prince of peace"; but, on the contrary, it was now the opinion of the Emperor and his advisers that the ex-Chancellor had begun to be an element of very serious discord, not only in Germany, but also in the field of her relations to foreign Powers, and that something must be done either to prevent a continuance of the evil or to remedy its pernicious effects. For these utterances of the resentful Prince, it was argued in high quarters at Berlin, were not the mere "hare-brained chatter of irresponsible frivolity,"

but the deliberate revelations of a mind which had been made the trusted repository of all the State secrets of his time. It was perfectly clear that, apart from the mere boldness and outspokenness of his criticism on the acts and policy of the Emperor who had sent him about his business, Bismarck had lifted the veil from certain transactions and events which ought to have been kept a profound secret. Certainly, at least, the Emperor thought so; for soon after the first batch of interviewers had been feasted in a double sense at Friedrichsruh, and less than two months after Bismarck had left Berlin, his Majesty authorised his new Chancellor, General Caprivi, to address a circular to all the representatives of Germany and Prussia abroad, requesting them to discount the damaging effect of the Prince's revelations and running criticisms.

It was not till more than two years later, when the breach between the Emperor and his ex-Chancellor seemed to have become irreparable, that the circular was published to the world. But Bismarck must have been fully aware of the existence of this circular soon after it was issued. Far, however, from accepting in a spirit of humble penitence the official correction which had been so gently administered to him, the rebellious Prince became all the more critical and querulous to his visitors. Hitherto, these had come to him in companies; but now his solitude was broken by deputations in droves, and by interviewers in armies. Although, after his fall, his old organs hastened to forsake him as rats abandon a sinking ship, he was quick to supply their place with other equally obsequious journals. Foremost among these was the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, which the ex-Chancellor selected by preference, being nearest to him, as the strident speaking-trumpet of his revelations, his

recriminations, his criticisms, and his remonstrances. Its editor got the *entrée* at Friedrichsruh, and even when he failed to turn up there for his daily dole, his news-service was well attended to by one or other of the penmen whom the ex-Chancellor always had about him. Either through the pens of these Press instruments, or in table-talk direct to his visitors, the ex-Chancellor took to denouncing the policy of his successor towards England, who had befooled him over the African Convention; towards Russia, whom he was fast throwing into the arms of France; and towards Austria, who had led him by the nose in the matter of the new fair-trade commercial treaties. But to all this bitter criticism the only reply was the Emperor's announcement at a military banquet that he had just raised his new Chancellor to the rank of Count, "as a reward of his distinguished and devoted labours."

For humbling Austria, Bismarck himself had been made a Count; and for humouring the same Power his successor in office had been raised by his grateful Sovereign to the same rank. It was very hard to bear. This had been the Emperor's answer to the Prince's strictures on the soldier-statesman who stepped into his shoes, just as his Majesty had replied to the revelations which aimed at ruining Herr von Boetticher, Chief of the Imperial Home Department, by making him promise to remain in office. When first the fallen Chancellor retired to Friedrichsruh he had dropped dark hints about his dismissal being mainly due to the intrigues of a statesman who owed his rise in the world to himself, and who had even been rewarded by the young Emperor with the Black Eagle, the Garter of Prussia, for his eminent services in the field of social reform. That Black Eagle, thought the ex-

Chancellor, was not blacker than the ingratitude of the man who had conspired to bring about his own fall.

But a time would come; and come it did, to be sure, when, more than a year afterwards, there went round the Press the startling revelation that Herr von Boetticher had received from the old Emperor the loan, or present, out of some secret-service or other State fund at his Majesty's disposal, of a very large sum of money to save a near relative from financial ruin. Was that not scandalous? Could a Minister who had accepted such bounty, and made himself so beholden to his Sovereign, claim to be heard in Parliament as an honest and independent expounder of political questions? Was such a revelation not calculated to shake Herr von Boetticher's position, shake him out of it altogether? Boetticher himself at least seemed to think so, for he hastened to tender his resignation. But the Emperor would not hear of such a thing; ordered Boetticher to put the paper back into his pocket; went and dined with Boetticher and his wife, whose hand he ostentatiously kissed; praised Boetticher, petted Boetticher, compelled him to remain in office as a man with whose services he could on no account dispense. Thus the revelation of another State secret, by whomsoever made, missed its aim, and only widened the breach that already yawned between Berlin and Friedrichsruh, which now became a kind of Hietzing, whither the blind and dispossessed King of Hanover had retired with a throng of his disaffected friends to hatch opposition to the schemes of Prussia. Little, doubtless, did Bismarck dream, when protesting against these dangerous practices of the ex-King George, that he would one day yet himself also be in the position of a dethroned monarch, and form a head

centre of intrigue and opposition to the powers that deposed him.

The Radicals raised a shout of malicious glee at the prospect of the man who had so often baulked and bullied them returning to Berlin as the champion critic of the Opposition. But they were disappointed. For —though returned by a poor majority in a test or second balloting for a National Liberal constituency— Bismarck hung back and refused the proffered bait. The truth is that he never seriously meant to carry his election to its logical conclusion. He cherished no real wish to appear in the Reichstag to stew the Government in its own juice, when he could do this so much better at Friedrichsruh. He had quite other fish to fry; but, to his great astonishment, the cooking process was only half effected. He had hoped that his election would be such a walk-over as could not fail to be construed, in the high places of Berlin, as a great popular demonstration in his favour; but, curiously enough, it was just all the other way about. His horror of sleeping in strange beds had kept him from acting on the parliamentary mandate which had ultimately been given him; but he overcame this aversion when presented with another and a better opportunity for appealing from the judgment of Cæsar to that of popular opinion.

This was when his eldest son, Count Herbert, became betrothed to the Hungarian Countess, Margaret Hoyos, a granddaughter, by the mother's side, of Mr. Whitehead, the English torpedo-manufacturer at Fiume; and when the marriage was fixed to take place at Vienna in the month of June (1892), Count Herbert, as is the custom in Germany, had sent a formal announcement of his engagement to all his friends, in the list of whom he still appeared to include the Emperor. But

his Majesty did no more in the way of an effusive return than duly acknowledge the receipt of his "kind announcement." This initial snub administered to the son only served to stiffen the resolution of his father to attend his wedding. News had reached him that the people of Dresden and other places on the route to Vienna were preparing great ovations in his honour, in expectation of his coming; and might not the love of the people compensate him for the loss of Imperial favour?

Accordingly, away he went, and in many respects his journey was a triumphal progress, with its bouquets, its beer-offerings, its addresses of sympathy, its speeches from railway carriages by the "Grand Old Man" of Germany, its patriotic song-chantings, and its torch-light processions. The hearts of the people were moved, and went out to their great national hero; but the hearts of their rulers were hardened, and they hid themselves from the sight of the man whom the Emperor no longer delighted to honour. At Dresden the Unifier of the Fatherland lauded and toasted the Sovereign of Saxony; but King Albert left the Burgomaster at the head of a civic deputation to do the honours of his capital to his old companion on the Meuse—the man who had let off Saxony so lightly in 1866—and sought the convenient refuge of a country seat.

But in Vienna, though the populace here again crowded and struggled to cheer, to catch a glimpse of, to kiss the hand of their previous conqueror, a still colder shoulder was presented to him by the high and mighty, who fled from his approach as if from the plague, and shut their doors in his face. The example in this respect was set by Francis Joseph himself; for could the Emperor of Austria afford to offend his own august

German ally? Before leaving Friedrichsruh—as he afterwards confessed in the bitterness of his heart—Bismarck, through the German Embassy in Vienna, had solicited an audience of the Austrian Emperor, "as a military man, and an admirer of his Majesty," and the *verbal* reply to this written request was a curt refusal.

But if Bismarck could not get the ear of the Austrian Emperor he could at least procure an audience of an Austrian editor, and to several of this class he poured forth his sorrows and opinions in the most reckless manner. He spoke as bitterly as he felt, and the acids of his plaintive eloquence chiefly fell on the policy of his successor, who had now undergone a great change in his eyes, and was nothing but an incompetent bungler—a "*ministre étranger—aux affaires*," the right man in the wrong place, a round peg in a square hole. The ex-Chancellor had alleged, as one of the main reasons which prevented him from taking his seat in the Reichstag, his unwillingness to hamper the Government by fighting with it *en visière ouverte;* but was his visor not up now (asked the organ of the Foreign Office), with a band of journalists for his squires? Had the Prince not already declared himself to be the chief of the Opposition, and was this patriotic? Was it not rather calculated to inflict a wound on the prestige of the Empire both at home and abroad? When had any retired statesman in all history ever conducted himself in such a manner? And, apart from his attacks on the policy of the State, what was to be thought about his aspersions on the person and character of the Emperor?

"I laugh at it all," said the ex-Chancellor to a friend who wanted to know what he thought of these semi-official homilies. "*Je m'en fiche*," quoth the contemptuous Prince, who affected, for tactical reasons,

to regard the Foreign Office article in question as a mere "stupid piece of audacious impertinence" on the part of his previous bottle-holder and boot-blacker, the editor of the *North German Gazette;* and he forthwith opened his doors at Kissingen, whither he had meanwhile gone from Munich to wash the bitter taste of Vienna out of his mouth with the waters of this Bavarian health-resort—where he had himself been shot at, eighteen years before, by a Catholic fanatic for defending the Reich against the encroachments of Rome—opened his doors at Kissingen to another ramping crowd of interviewers, to whom he held forth on the causes of his having been so haughtily cold-shouldered in the Austrian capital. "Oh," thought the Emperor, who was just preparing to start for Norway in pursuit of pleasure and of whales; "there need be no ground for popular misapprehension on this score"; and he forthwith commanded the publication of the dispatch which his Chancellor wrote to the German Ambassador in Vienna, on the occasion of the Bismarck wedding, and was tantamount to an official boycotting of the whole family.

At the time of the Kiel meeting (1892) between the Tsar and the Emperor—which Bismarck, by the way, described as an "untoward incident," and doubted whether the Tsar would feel much complimented by having been made an Admiral of the German Fleet—an attempt had been made, as it had been repeatedly made before, to promote a reconciliation between William II. and his ex-Chancellor. But it had come to nothing, the Emperor proving much more obdurate towards the irrepressible *frondeur* of Friedrichsruh than he had been in the case of another of his diplomatic servants, Count Limburg-Stirum, who had been prosecuted, but pardoned, for mildly writing against those

commercial treaties which formed the object of Bismarck's fierce denunciation. For government in Germany is not by party, as in England, but by permanence; and servants of the State, even when out of office, may not agitate against its policy or the persons of its chiefs. Such is the law and custom of the land; but, might not a Bismarck claim immunity from law and custom? Certainly, at least, an Arnim could not, as he found to his cost at the hands of the very man who, in the opinion of many, had already been sailing perilously near the wind of a State prosecution as the divulger of State secrets much more important than those which were revealed by poor Dr. Geffcken.

The quarrel between William II. and his ex-Chancellor had grown to be one of the gravest scandals of the age, and formed matter for sincere lament with all patriotic Germans. Above all, it had exercised a most disturbing influence on the domestic affairs of the Empire, and it was impossible to see in what its continuance might not result. The man who had made the German Empire could not, even in his retirement, be treated as a "negligable quantity" by its present ruler (whom Bismarck had resentfully characterised as a "rich heir"), yet sovereign dignity on one side proved just as strong as wounded *amour propre* on the other.

In this, as in most other quarrels, there had doubtless been faults on both sides, but for a long time it seemed as if the parties to it had hardened their hearts against all reconciliation. Bismarck, on his side, contended that it lay with his Sovereign to take the first step, while his Majesty appeared to be in no hurry to do so. When the Reichstag was dissolved in the early summer of 1893, and the nation appealed to on behalf of the new Army Bill, it was calculated that a reconcilia-

tion could not fail to have a most favourable effect on the elections, and a vain attempt was made to bring about a meeting between the Emperor and the Prince at the unveiling of a monument in Görlitz to William I.

In the autumn of the same year, however, Bismarck fell very seriously ill at Kissingen, and then the Emperor's heart was touched. His opportunity had come, and he telegraphed to the Prince from Güns in Austria, where he was attending the military manœuvres with his Imperial ally, expressing the greatest concern at the ex-Chancellor's indisposition, and begging him, "in view of the unfavourable climatic situation of Varzin and Friedrichsruh, to take up your quarters for the winter in one of my castles in Central Germany." To this gracious offer Bismarck at once replied by respectfully declining it, sharing as he did the opinion of his doctor (Schweninger) that, "my complaint being of a nervous character, if I pass the winter in the midst of my accustomed surroundings and occupations, it will be the likeliest means of promoting my recovery." Nowhere was there anything but hearty praise of what the Emperor had done, and he now stood a cubit taller in the estimation of his subjects. On the other hand, it almost looked as if Bismarck himself had not been altogether willing to accept the olive-branch thus held out to him; and a speech which the Emperor subsequently delivered at Bremen, when he eulogised his father and grandfather as the *real* founders of the Reich, which they certainly were not, was thought to reveal his Majesty's bitterness against the implacable exile of Friedrichsruh.

But a few months passed away, and then the Emperor, of his own magnanimous impulse, determined to make another advance. For this purpose he despatched

(January, 1894) to Friedrichsruh one of his personal aides-de-camp, Lieut.-Colonel von Moltke, a nephew of the great "battle-thinker," to congratulate the Prince on his recovery from an attack of influenza, and present him with a bottle of very fine old Hock. The ex-Chancellor accepted the gift, and said that he would come to Berlin to thank the Emperor in person on the occasion of his Majesty's approaching birthday. All Germany was more or less intoxicated with that single flask of rare old Rhenish which the Emperor had sent to Friedrichsruh. Truly the Rhine is a wonderful river, and had once more played a most important part in the history of the Fatherland. There may have been political calculation in the Emperor's act, but there was much more of what might be called a *coup de cœur*. Hence the sudden change of scene that was beheld by the Berliners on the day before their Kaiser's thirty-fifth birthday and military jubilee—a scene the like of which had not been witnessed even in that city of historic pageants since Bismarck himself, nearly four years previously, underwent what he himself called the hideous mockery of a "first-class funeral." Then, too, a squadron of Cuirassiers escorted him to the station, from which, a year later still, his coffined compeer, Moltke, made his final exit from the scene. Yet the Kaiser did not then accompany his departing Chancellor, as he sorrowfully followed the body of his great Field-Marshal.

But time, which heals so very many wounds, also brings round some most amazing changes; and on that 26th of January, Bismarck, having been escorted from the station by the Emperor's brother, and accompanied back to it by the Emperor himself, all melting kindness and kisses, formed the central figure in a

Court pageant of the heart, which evoked more patriotic enthusiasm than had ever been displayed in Berlin since the triumphal entry of the troops after the war with France. In less than a month later the Emperor returned his ex-Chancellor's visit at Friedrichsruh; and on the occasion of the Prince's seventy-ninth birthday, soon after, his Majesty sent him a magnificent steel cuirass—for when at Berlin he had been appointed honorary chief of the Seydlitz Cuirassiers, whose uniform he had ever worn in war and peace. "May the solid steel," wrote his Majesty, "which is to cover your breast be regarded as the symbol of German gratitude which enfolds you with its steadfast loyalty, and to which I, too, desire to give my eloquent expression." "I shall don this new breast-plate," replied the Prince, "as the symbol of your Majesty's gracious favour, and leave it to my children as a lasting memento of the same."

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